

Contents of 2013 State Plan – Revised Attachments

The draft attachments listed below have been revised for the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) State Plan 2013 submission and are open for public review and comment. Following the Public Meetings scheduled for April 2, 4, & 17 and the written public comment period ending on May 1, BRS and the State Rehabilitation Council will review and may revise the State Plan attachments prior to submission to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and to the Governor.

4.2(c) – SRC Summary & Recommendations; DSU Response

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

4.10 – Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

4.11(b) – Annual Estimates

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

4.11(e)(2) – Evaluation & Reports of Progress

6.3 – Quality, Scope & Extent of Supported Employment Services

**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 2013 (submitted FY 2012)**

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.

SRC Participation

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Chair and/or members of the SRC have collaborated with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and attended or participated in the following:

1. BRS Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA);
2. BRS State Plan;
3. BRS Transition Committee;
4. Connect-Ability Employment Summit 2011;
5. Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 Conference;
6. National Council of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) Conferences (2) and Teleconferences (6);
7. SRC Meetings (six per year);
8. Review of Administrative Hearing Outcomes (1); and
9. A survey of the BRS offices.

Legislative Changes

Effective July 1, 2011, the State Legislature removed the Vocational Rehabilitation program from the Department of Social Services and combined it with several other disability-related programs to form the new Bureau of Rehabilitative Services. This new agency now includes the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, the Board of Education and Services for the Blind, the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired, the Driver Training Program for Persons with Disabilities, and the Worker's Rehabilitation Program. This merger aligns services together that may assist consumers who have some similarity in need. While the change in name was effective in July, the actual transition is still a work in progress. Amy Porter was appointed as the Director of the new Bureau of Rehabilitative Services. SRC members have monitored the transition to ensure that the needs of VR consumers remain a priority as the new agency works out the details.

Office Surveys

The Consumer Satisfaction Committee of the SRC led members in surveying the offices to determine visibility, accessibility, and consistency of information offered to consumers upon their initial visit. The committee developed the survey and members of the SRC

visited BRS offices to inquire about receiving services. They assessed how easy each office was to find, how easy it was to park, how easy it was to enter the building and find staff that were knowledgeable about vocational rehabilitation services. Some offices stand alone and are independent of other services; some are co-located with One-Stop Centers at the State Labor Department. Some offices schedule appointments to meet with a counselor and some schedule group orientation meetings that offer general information about possible services available at BRS. As a result of conducting this survey, SRC members gained better insight regarding what consumers face and how they begin their collaboration with the VR program. They also learned more about constraints that impact the VR staff and their ability to serve consumers.

Follow-up to Previous Recommendations

The SRC had significant interest in being a part of the selection process for the new agency director, however that desire was unfulfilled. As Amy Porter was selected as the new director, we are pleased with the outcome.

The SRC is also pleased to learn that video telephones have been installed in the BRS offices which will help facilitate working with consumers who are deaf.

SRC Recommendations to BRS

As a result of the SRC office surveys this year, the following recommendations are offered:

Recommendation 1 –

- Signage to locate the building and direction to the BRS office needs improvement in these offices:
 - Danbury, Enfield, Hartford, Middletown, Norwich, Torrington, & Waterbury.

We are aware that the consolidation of the new Bureau of Rehabilitative Services may require a name change for the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. We hope that signs and directions to the office locations will be highly visible to all visitors in all offices.

Recommendation 2 –

- The following offices need more accessible parking:
 - Danbury, Hartford, Stamford & Waterbury.

Recommendation 3 –

- Availability of BRS staff to greet consumers upon arrival needs to be addressed in the following locations:
 - Danbury, Danielson, Hartford, & Torrington.

Recommendation 4 –

- Staff was overall helpful, informative, and pleasant. There was at least one person in Norwich who seemed to be exceptional in providing customer service, even anticipating questions yet to be asked. Perhaps BRS could add customer service training so that more staff has the same level of skills in welcoming consumers and anticipating their needs.

Please Note: Public Meeting observations will be added following the public meetings, no later than May 1. Additional recommendations may be made at that time. The BRS Director will respond to all recommendations prior to the submission of the State Plan to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and the Governor.

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.

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 (CRPs). 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:

- The statewide Ongoing Employment Supports Committee is a resource for supported employment funding opportunities on a case by case basis
- Cooperative agreements and technical assistance are provided for the Ticket to Work program. These agreements include CRPs, One-Stop Centers and Independent Living Centers (ILCs).
- Maintain the Interagency Employment Practice Improvement Collaborative for staff in the bureau, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), and CRPs designed to increase successful employment outcomes to an underserved target population.

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.

Data System on Personnel

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) maintains a computerized record system for personnel needs, resources, and training. In addition to this information, the bureau uses a caseload management program called System 7 and results of ongoing needs assessments to analyze personnel needs on an annual basis.

As of March 2012, 156 active positions were filled. The number and type of BRS positions are identified in the personnel chart further down in this attachment.

The bureau currently has 81 of 81 vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor positions filled. Twelve serve specialty caseloads:

- one counselor prioritizes consumers with mental health diagnoses;
- one counselor prioritizes transition caseloads;
- six counselors prioritize individuals that are Deaf; and
- four counselors prioritize Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (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 while it supports individual staff development needs.

Annual Information on Staff and Consumer Ratios

The bureau served 8,441 consumers in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2011. With 81 VR counselors, the ratio of VR counselors to all consumers is 1:104; the ratio of VR supervisors to consumers is 1:1055. The ratio of all staff to consumers is 1:54. Of the 8,441 total annual consumers, 2,194 developed an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The ratio of staff to consumers who developed an IPE is different: 81 VR counselors to all consumers with an IPE is 1:27; VR supervisors to consumers with an IPE is 1:274; and all staff to consumers with an IPE is 1:14.

Current Need for Staff

Internal promotions and other occasions of attrition result in an ongoing need to recruit and hire staff at the entry level. The bureau will continue to hire staff until full staffing as outlined in the subsequent chart is achieved.

Qualified Personnel Needs - Five Year Projections

The bureau expects its staffing level to remain constant with the positions identified in the chart below in the next five years. In making this projection, the bureau considered the following:

- costs for staff, administration and case services;
- projected increase in transition referrals;
- budget for staff increases; and
- the likelihood of increased federal dollars for the vocational rehabilitation program.

The bureau updates its four-year budget projections quarterly to determine the need to adjust staff/case service/administrative costs.

The bureau continues to evaluate the skills support staff will need to assist the counseling staff over the next several years. The bureau also continues to review potential duty changes for staff which may occur as a result of responding to needs as they arise.

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Administrative Fiscal Secretarial Support Staff	40	1	6
2	Central Office Consultants	13	0	2
3	Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC)	7	0	1
4	District Directors	3	0	1
5	Managers	3	1	1
6	Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisors	9	1	2
7	Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors	81	0	24
8		0	0	0
9		0	0	0
10		0	0	0

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 identifies the CORE (Council on Rehabilitation Education) accredited institution of higher education in the state that is preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals. All rehabilitation counseling graduates from this college 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	Central Connecticut State University Connecticut	81	2	10	17
2		0	0	0	0
3		0	0	0	0
4		0	0	0	0
5		0	0	0	0

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 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 to the Connecticut-based CORE institution listed above, we are in close contact with the regional institutions from which we have traditionally found Counselor applicants (Assumption and Springfield Colleges in MA, and Salve Regina in RI); 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 32% diversity of our staff exceeds the 25% diversity of our state. We are also pleased to have recruited 12% 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 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. These counselors must apply to a planned program at an approved graduate school within six months of the hire date and complete their master's degree within four years of the first eligible semester of classes. 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 (CSPD)

The current requirements for CSPD are based on the national standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. 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, or
4. Master's, Specialist, or Doctoral degree in one of thirteen qualifying majors (as specified by CRCC) granted from a college or university accredited by a recognized regional accrediting body at the time the degree was conferred.

The bureau will pay for and require the following graduate courses for new counselors in permanent positions with a Master's in a related field as described in 3 or 4 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; or
- o Community Resources or Delivery of Rehabilitation Services.

• 36 months of vocational counseling experience or less – up to six additional courses are required to meet requirements for CSPD:

- o Theories and Techniques of Counseling;
- o Foundations of Rehabilitation Counseling;
- o Assessment;
- o Occupational Information or Job Placement;
- o Medical or Psychosocial Aspects of Disabilities; and/or
- 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 (CEU’s), 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 90 staff positions required to meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Standards; 81 counselors and nine supervisors. As of this writing, no counselor positions are vacant; one supervisor position is vacant.

All staff in these categories meet the CSPD requirements, with the exception of those that are newly hired, or in the midst of their Master’s program. Newly hired counselors who do not meet

the CSPD standard are allowed three years to complete CSPD courses. Sixteen counselors are taking one to six courses to meet the Connecticut standard for CSPD. Counselors hired at the Bachelor's level are allowed four years to complete a CORE-accredited rehabilitation Master's degree. There are currently two counselors in this category.

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 34 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, 10 Connecticut Licensed Professional Counselors, four National Board of Certified Counselors, seven Certified Work Incentive and Assistance Programs (WIPA) Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC) and five 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.

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:

- Public Hearings (2012);
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment results;
- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) 107 Review;
- Key training personnel collaboration with TACE (Technical Assistance & Continuing Education), Region 1 staff;
- Management reports; and
- Manager, district director, consultant, and supervisor feedback.

In addition to ensuring that staff meets CSPD requirements, BRS provides Foundations of CT VR, a year-long series of in-service training for new staff and staff who need refresher training. This includes a broad array of topics pertaining to VR such as: Foundations of CT VR Training, trainings on the specific populations, independent living, transition, and community rehabilitation services. A variety of training methods are utilized to assure that training activities are diverse enough to address individual learning styles.

Retention of 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. BRS attributes the reasons for retention success as follows:

- BRS recruits staff that is committed to the importance of VR work;
- In-service training is available to staff at all levels;
- Salaries are high, benefits are good and most staff have a thirty-five hour workweek; some choose to work four days a week;
- The bureau also invites staff to give input into decisions that affect the way they work;
- To continue with staff's involvement of helping to plan the new case management system, staff became heavily involved in train-the-trainer sessions, testing and evaluations, and problem solving of System 7; and
- Ongoing committees that enable staff involvement include: Staff Training, Regional Training Committees, Community Rehabilitation Providers, Transition, Autism Spectrum, and the BRS Annual Meeting.

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.

In 2008, BRS re-engaged in a process to create Individual Staff Development Plans (ISDP) with all employees. The bureau has continued with its plan for each staff person to be given an opportunity to create an ISDP. The plans identify areas of an employee's current 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 encourages staff to pursue areas of their strength and interest. 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.

Performance System for Measuring Counselor Performance

In 2009, the bureau implemented a new evaluation system for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. The new system balances a computerized report of each counselor's success in meeting federal standards and indicators. It includes the supervisor's assessment of softer skills such as counseling skills, the ability to deal with people and the ability to follow through effectively. Further, the supervisor evaluates the counselor's knowledge of agency policy and fiscal procedures. Consequently, counselors are provided with objective feedback to address and enhance their professional development.

Succession Planning

The bureau's succession planning has proved valuable. Promotional opportunities are encouraged. Focus the past year has been to fill counselor vacancies and ensure new staff are adequately trained. Succession planning will continue to be a part of the bureau's long-range plans.

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; and
- Participate in various committees where members assume leadership roles for training, policy development, and communication with other staff.

The bureau was awarded two five-year, in-service training grants. Both awards cover the time period of 10/1/2010 – 9/30/2015 and training activities have been initiated. The Bureau has developed an integrated program of training, education, and development activities for its staff to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences to improve the quality and outcomes of the vocational rehabilitation process. Our training project contributes to our counselor knowledge of current VR practices and on BRS policy.

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 Connecticut Tech Act Project director provides training and consultation for bureau staff.

Other in-service trainings on specific disability populations contain information on technological solutions for consumers.

Training Based on our In-Service Training Project

The bureau continually analyzes all consumer data to identify areas where it needs to increase training or vary approaches. The In-Service Training Project has identified two major goals to guide the next five years of the grant. The goals include:

- Goal I: To improve the skills of all Bureau staff by providing training and development in vocational rehabilitation service provision, responsiveness to consumers, Bureau mission and programs, awareness of state and community resources.
- Goal II: To improve recruitment and retention of Bureau staff by providing career development and succession planning activities to assist counselors in defining appropriate career paths and to assist the Bureau to maximize its resources, while continuing to meet CSPD requirements.

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.

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 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. The list below indicates the languages spoken by current staff and the regions in which they work:

- American Sign Language (ASL) – Northern, Southern, Western
- French – Northern
- French Italian – Southern
- Portuguese – Northern
- Spanish – Northern, Southern, Western

The bureau can also hire interpreters in most languages and can access interpreter services over the phone for all languages.

Each district has Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) on staff to work with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. These counselors are equipped with newly installed video phones. 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.

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 Education 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.

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

According to the US Census Bureau American Community Survey, Connecticut had 3,519,913 civilian residents who were non-institutionalized in 2010. From this number, 2,220,078 persons were 18-64 years of age; 8.1% of this population, 179,340 persons, had a disability (margin of error +/-0.3%).

Records from 2010 also show of the 344,221 non-institutionalized people with disabilities over age 16, only 24% were employed. The remaining 76% individuals of working age with disabilities were unemployed. As BRS may provide transition services to students as young as age 14, many of these individuals may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services in the future.

These statistics indicate a considerable number of individuals who are not currently working plus a sizeable number of the transition-age individuals may be eligible for VR services. In addition, an unknown number of the 24% who are working may be under employed. Persons with disabilities who are already employed may also require services to attain employment consistent with their 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) 2012, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS or the Bureau) projects that it will serve 4,769 eligible consumers in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act. This is a 3.4% increase from FFY 2011, when 4,611 individuals received services under an IPE.

BRS has been engaged in a multi-year effort to rebuild its counseling staff with qualified professionals since a Retirement Incentive Program (RIP) offered by the State of Connecticut in late FFY 2009 resulted in a large amount of attrition. With the Bureau's continued focus on recruitment and ongoing training of newer staff, a 3.3% increase in consumers served under an IPE was realized in FFY 2011 over FFY 2010. Anticipated production increases are further substantiated by an 8% increase (through 2/29/12) in new plans being implemented for FFY 2012 when compared to the same point in the year during FFY 2011.

BRS has been operating in an Order of Selection (OOS) since 1991, serving only all Priority #1 (Most Significant Disability) and Priority #2 (Significant Disability) consumers. As a result of the receipt of unprecedented sums of reallocated Title I funds in both FFY 2010 and 2011, the Bureau has been able to apply resources to fill critical vacancies and strategically build the needed capacity to be able to expand services to include individuals in Priority # 3 (Not Significant Disability) status. This ability to serve all eligible individuals translates into the removal of an OOS, a change that the Bureau plans to implement at the onset of FFY 2013.

The absence of a significant waiting list and the fact that BRS has consistently utilized the same OOS for over 20 years makes projecting the number of Priority # 3 individuals to be served extraordinarily difficult. Over more than two decades, referral sources have become accustomed to the Bureau's OOS and proactively self-screen their potential referrals against our well-known criteria. Initially, the Bureau anticipates that numbers of new applicants with Not Significant Disabilities will be low. It will take time for referral sources and the general public to digest the elimination of our OOS. At the same time, the numbers do have the potential to expand rapidly when considering the large percentage of unemployed individuals with disabilities reported in the most recent Census data referenced in the beginning of this attachment. Upon analysis of referral sources that BRS expects will most rapidly respond to the elimination of OOS and the populations with whom they interact, the Bureau projects that 500 eligible individuals with Not Significant Disabilities will implement IPE's in FFY 2013. In addition, the Bureau expects a 6% increase over FFY 2012 in Priority # 1 and Priority # 2 consumers receiving services. Combining projections for all priority statuses yields a reasonable projection of 5,553 eligible consumers receiving services under an IPE during FFY 2013. This represents a total increase in projected number of consumers served under Title I funding of 16.4% over FFY 2012.

Please note, this expansion in services, when applied to the Bureau's four-year financial planning model, is not sustainable indefinitely. As our newer counseling staff becomes more entrenched in their local communities, their ability to conduct outreach to and serve individuals with significant disabilities will expand quickly to a point where fiscal resources will not sustain serving consumers of a lower priority status. Therefore, BRS anticipates that a reinstatement of an Order of Selection limiting services to Priority # 1 and Priority # 2 individuals due to fiscal constraints will likely be required for FFY 2015.

During FFY 2011, BRS assisted 148 consumers eligible for Supported Employment funding and purchased services for 127 consumers under Title VI-B of the Act, utilizing \$318,349. Essentially, the Bureau expended over four times more Title VI-B funding in 2011 than it did in 2010. In FFY 2010, BRS spent \$78,170 while serving 43 consumers. This remarkable increase in utilization of Title VI-B funds is a direct result of statewide training related to Supported Employment and quality assurance controls put in place to monitor proper categorization of IPE's at the counselor level. BRS will continue to present this training to all new counselors who are hired and will be make it available to veteran staff on an as-needed basis. Quality assurance measures will also remain in effect indefinitely to continue to monitor proper Title VI-B fund utilization.

Thus far in FFY 2012 (year to date 2-29-12), BRS has purchased services for 97 individuals, expending \$191,673 in Title VI-B funds. This represents a pace somewhat higher than FFY 2011 service and expenditure levels. By the conclusion of FFY 2012 the Bureau expects to provide purchased services for 150 consumers within FFY 2012 using Title VI-B with a total projected expenditure of \$352,000.

The Bureau anticipates that 162 individuals could potentially receive services funded under Title VI-B. In combination with the 5,553 individuals projected to receive services under Title I, the total number of individuals who could be served in FFY 2013 is 5,715.

Costs of Services

Title I purchase of services (POS) costs for Priority #1 and Priority #2 consumers in FFY 2012 is projected to be approximately \$11.5 million. In addition to a traditional POS expenditure of \$9.6 million, the Bureau has and will continue to utilize available funding to initiate alternative client service-oriented projects that promise to pay significant dividends to our consumers throughout FFY 2012 and beyond. Over the course of FFY 2012 the Bureau intends to invest \$1 million in serving significant numbers of consumers by funding their participation in Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs, Summer Youth Employment Programs and Employer Outreach and Hiring events designed to serve groups of consumers. In addition to these projected expenditures, BRS continues to participate in and fund an interagency agreement with the State Department of Education to expand outreach and the availability of services to transition aged consumers in secondary schools. The bureau will invest approximately \$870,000 on this project over the course of FFY 2012.

Through traditional POS for Priority # 1 and Priority # 2 individuals, as well as expansion into providing services for individuals of Priority # 3 status, BRS projects to expend approximately \$11.1 million in FFY 2013. This projection is predicated on a 6% growth in Priority # 1 and # 2 consumers served over FFY 2012 level, as well as the reasonable estimate of Priority # 3 individuals being served, as cited above. The Bureau also intends to continue to utilize approximately \$1.3 million to fund consumer participation in Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs and Employer Outreach and Hiring events as previously outlined. This results in a total FFY 2013 services expenditure

projection of \$12.4 million for Title I funding. Please note that total expenditures may increase upon targeted expansion of the projects mentioned above.

With respect to the 162 consumers projected to receive services under Title VI-B during FFY 2013, the Bureau estimates a complete expenditure of carried forward FFY 2012 funding and allocated FFY 2013 Supported Employment funding, which is expected to be approximately \$350,000.

Row	Category	Title I or Title VI Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
	All eligible Consumers (Title I)	\$12,400,000	5,553	\$2,233
	Most Significant (Title VI)	\$350,000	162	\$2,160
			—	
			—	
			—	
			—	
			—	
			—	
Totals		12,750,000	5,715	\$2,231

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.

(1) 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 disabilities;
- Are in need of ongoing support for the duration of their employment; and
- Will have extended support services available beyond BRS time-limited services.

BRS maintains that given the proper supports, the majority of persons with disabilities, including those individuals with the most significant disabilities, are capable of maintaining competitive employment. Supported employment services are available to individuals with the most significant disabilities who have been unable to maintain competitive employment because of the severity of their disabilities. The goal is to assist these individuals to achieve employment in the most integrated setting possible.

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.

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.”

Through FFY 2012 (year to date 2-29-12), the bureau has purchased supported employment services for 97 individuals. This represents a pace somewhat higher than FFY 2011 service (127 persons) and expenditure levels. The bureau projects to provide purchased services for 150 consumers within FFY 2012 using Title VI-B. Based upon FFY 2011 data, of the 5,053 individuals projected to receive services in FFY 2013, the bureau anticipates that 162 could potentially receive services funded under part B of Title VI.

(2) The Bureau continues to increase the availability of supported employment services and expenditures to individuals with the most significant disabilities by implementing the following strategies:

- Maintain a Desk Guide of Supported Employment Resources;
- Provide ongoing training and technical assistance to bureau staff and providers on accessing supported employment long term supports;
- Collaborate with the stakeholders in the Departments of Developmental Disabilities (DDS) and Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) in formalized training of staff in all agencies in the similarities and differences in supported employment policies and practices; and
- Coordinate access to training opportunities for CRP staff in the core contracted services for skill enhancement and professional development.

**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 2013 (submitted FY 2012)**

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 2010 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.

The Bureau of Rehabilitation (BRS) has developed a set of strategies designed to address the goals and priorities identified in section 4.11 (c)(1) of this plan. BRS used 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.

Goal 1: To improve the quality of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities.

Priority areas:

- customer service and provision of information;
- ongoing skill development; and
- case management in an electronic system.

Objective 1.1: To improve the Bureau's performance on Standards and Indicators with respect to quality.

- Strategy: continue to use a performance evaluation model that incorporates selected standards and indicators into annual service ratings of employees.
 - Measure: rehabilitation rate (standards and indicators 1.2) -
 - Indicator 1.2 – Of cases closed after services, percent of employment outcomes: ($\geq 58\%$) 60.70%. The bureau had a rehabilitation rate of 60.7%. Therefore, we passed this Indicator.
 - Measure: consumer wage comparison to state averages (standards and indicators 1.5) -
 - Indicator 1.5 – Earnings ratio – hourly wage competitive employment to hourly wage of all employed in state ($\geq .52$) .57.

The bureau had an average earnings ratio of .57 when compared to the state average earnings. Therefore, we passed this Indicator.

- Measure: primary source of support (standards and indicators 1.6) -
 - Indicator 1.6 – Self-support at closure VS self-support at application (≥ 53) 43.8%. The bureau failed this Indicator as 43.8% of our successful outcomes went from not self-supporting to self-supporting at closure.

Objective 1.2: To improve customer service through the provision of information

- Strategy: Develop materials and post on the BRS website.
 - Measure: # of website hits -
 - The BRS Website is constantly updated with information about the vocational rehabilitation program and announcements about disability-related opportunities. Visitors to the site may learn how to apply for services, find transition information, read publications and the BRS Policy Manual, learn about hiring a personal care assistant or about targeted projects within the employment division, and may track the activities of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) while learning how to become a member. We also have links to Connect-Ability, the Tech Act Project, Ticket to Work, the newly-created Bureau of Rehabilitative Services and the Department of Social Services. We also post updates from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). There were 114,640 page views to the BRS site for FFY 2011.
- Strategy: Develop materials and post on the Connect-Ability website.
 - Measure: # of website hits -
 - Connect-Ability continued with its marketing campaign, that included the creation of two new TV spots, print ads and internet banner ads in addition to a comprehensive website www.connect-ability.com. Connect-Ability responded to 450 calls for technical assistance and had 25,000 unique visitors to its website in FFY 2011.

Objective 1.3: To develop customer service models and skills for all staff

- Strategy: Use In-Service Training Project to provide customer service training to all staff.
 - Measure: consumer satisfaction-
 - The bureau was awarded two five-year, in-service training grants covering October 1, 2010 – September 30, 2015. The Bureau has developed an integrated program of training, education, and

development activities for staff to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences to improve the quality of services and the number and quality of employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Our training project enhances counselor knowledge of current VR practices and BRS policy. In-service training is available to all staff.

BRS provides Foundations of CT VR, a year-long series of in-service training for new staff and staff who need refresher training. This includes a broad array of topics pertaining to VR such as: Foundations of CT VR Training, trainings on specific populations, independent living, transition, and community rehabilitation services. A variety of training methods are utilized to assure that training activities are diverse enough to address individual learning styles.

The bureau continually analyzes all consumer data to identify areas where it needs to increase training or vary approaches. The In-Service Training Project has identified two major goals to guide the next five years of the grant. The goals include:

1. Goal I: To improve the skills of all Bureau staff by providing training and development in vocational rehabilitation service provision, responsiveness to consumers, Bureau mission and programs, awareness of state and community resources.
2. Goal II: To improve recruitment and retention of Bureau staff by providing career development and succession planning activities to assist counselors in defining appropriate career paths and to assist the Bureau to maximize its resources, while continuing to meet CSPD requirements.

Consumer satisfaction as it relates to counselor knowledge will be evaluated in the Regional Survey & Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) later this year.

- Over the past year **Connect-Ability** created an online training platform in partnership with the **Bureau of Rehabilitation Services** and the **Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**. The purpose of the online training platform, called the Distance Learning Initiative, is to provide online training for individuals with disabilities, family members, educators, employers, and anyone else who's interested in taking the training modules. A variety of training modules will be available on topics such as assistive technology, personal care assistance, work readiness, ADA and disability etiquette, as well as some specific training geared to

vocational rehabilitation counselors and community rehabilitation providers. The training modules are available for free by signing up for at an account at www.connect-ability.com/e-learning.

Objective 1.4: To maximize the utility of System 7, BRS' new case management system.

- Strategy: Use In-Service Training Project to provide System 7 case management training.
 - Measure: counselor survey, consumer satisfaction -
 - Staff has indicated a need for a more organized plan for training New Hires; a way to identify daily responsibility for informal training, and the need to make available ongoing refresher courses for staff at large to address key areas of function with the case management system. We are currently exploring how to include System 7 in the existing training in a manner that would be most beneficial to the counseling staff.
 - Consumers will be questioned about satisfaction in service as it relates to the new data base in upcoming consumer satisfaction surveys.

Goal 2: To increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, particularly those individuals from unserved or underserved populations.

Priority areas:

- individuals from minority backgrounds (particularly Latinos);
- young adults with disabilities (particularly those with learning disabilities);
- individuals with psychiatric disability; and
- individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

Objective 2.1: To increase overall employment outcomes.

- Strategy: continue to use a performance evaluation model that incorporates selected standards and indicators into annual service ratings of employees.
 - Measure: rehabilitation outcomes (standards and indicators 1.1) -
 - Indicator 1.1 - Change in employment outcome from previous year: (≥ 923) 1,171. The bureau closed a total 1,171 cases with successful outcomes in FY 2011. This was 249 more cases with successful rehabilitation outcomes than the prior year. Therefore, we passed this indicator.

Objective 2.2: To increase employment outcomes for Latinos.

- Strategy: work with the Bureau's Latino Committee to develop new approaches to working with consumers who are Latino.
 - Measure: rehabilitation rate for individuals with ethnicity identified as Hispanic -
 - Measure: Rehabilitation rate for Latino Consumers for FFY 2011: 48.9% compared to the Rehabilitation Rate for Latino Consumers for FFY 2010: 65.2%. Staff will continue to work on solutions that will raise this rate.

Objective 2.3: To increase employment and postsecondary outcomes for young adults.

- Strategy: cross-training on new Learning Disability (LD) guidelines and transition toolkit.
 - Measure: training evaluations -
 - Training was provided to School Psychologists via six regional half-day presentations regarding the identification criteria for students with LD and the impact on transition age students as they exit school heading toward college, employment, and/or working with BRS or other state agencies. However, there are no outcomes from training evaluations.
- Strategy: Partner with State Department of Education and community partners to conduct training and outreach activities with school districts throughout the state.
 - Measure: # of employment outcomes for individuals referred prior to age 24, as compared to previous year -
 - During the past year, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) selected the Graduation Rate indicator along with closing the achievement gap for Latino and African-American students with disabilities as a priority for CSDE's November 2011 site visit. These priorities will be the focus of all professional development and technical assistance activities for the 2012-13 academic year. Approximately 50 public and private agency personnel, community providers, parents and families participated in the planning.
 - The CSDE VR Consultant worked with the BRS Transition Committee to revise training for BRS counselors on the identification of transition-age students with learning disabilities to incorporate the new CT guidelines as specified in IDEA 2004 and the revised Guidelines for the Identification of Students with Learning Disabilities (2010). Trained the BRS Transition Committee to provide district professional development and

technical assistance to regional personnel which was completed in each of the three districts.

- The CSDE and the State Education Resource Center (SERC) use the **74-piece Transition Toolkit** as part of their training with school districts. This toolkit, available on the BRS Website at <http://www.ct.gov/brs> (School to Work), helps staff, consumers and their families, and stakeholders with transition planning.
- Measure: For FFY 2011, 21.5% of employment outcomes were individuals referred prior to age 24. For FFY 2010, 17.1% of employment outcomes were individuals referred prior to age 24.

Objective 2.4: To increase employment outcomes for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.

- Strategy: partner with Local Mental Health Authorities and state Mental Health agency.
 - Measure: # of employment outcomes, as compared to previous year -
 - Measure: Out of 1,171 successful employment outcomes for FFY 2011, 342 or 29% of the consumers received services due to a primary and/or a secondary psychiatric disability. Compared to FFY 2010, 24% (225 out of 922 successful closures) of the consumers received services due to a primary and/or a secondary psychiatric disability.
 - Measure: earnings of individuals in competitive employment, as compared to previous year -
 - Measure: For FFY 2011, of those successfully closed consumers in competitive employment who received services due to a primary and/or secondary psychiatric disability, the average monthly earnings at closure were \$1,296.85 per month (average annual salary of \$15,562.16). Compared to FFY 2010, the average monthly earnings at closure for the 24% of those consumers who received services due to having a psychiatric disability were \$1,259.03 (average annual income of \$15,108.36).

Objective 2.5: To develop more responsive services for individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

- Strategy: Review recommendations from the Autism Task Force.
 - Measure: Appropriate recommendations are implemented -
 - BRS convened an Autism Task Force to develop recommendations for BRS, partner agencies, organizations, and families. The task force submitted

recommendations to BRS in March 2012 and they are currently being evaluated.

- Strategy: Utilize the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Committee.
 - Measure: # of consumers and families participating in the Committee -
 - The Committee met with 25 families/individuals and, in addition, conducted about 15 case conferences.

Goal 3: To increase access to services for all individuals with disabilities.

Priority areas:

- services for individuals who are deaf;
- services for individuals whose primary language is Spanish;
- transportation; and
- timeliness of access to initial appointment.

Objective 3.1: To increase access to services for individuals with disabilities.

- Strategy: Make consumer-use workstations available in all offices.
 - Measure: # of people using consumer-use workstations -
 - Although equipment has been ordered, no workstations have been installed. Space has been identified in some offices while other offices have space limitations. BRS will continue to pursue the installation of these computers for consumer use.

Objective 3.2: To increase access to services for individuals who are deaf.

- Strategy: Make video phones available in all BRS offices.
 - Measure: # of video phones available, usage -
 - BRS currently has eight Video Phones for Deaf Professionals or Professionals working with Deaf consumers in district offices; one additional phone will be installed in East Hartford.
 - BRS also has 11 public Video Phones for consumers to use located in the Danbury, Danielson, Hartford, Manchester, Middletown, New Britain, New Haven, Norwich, Stamford, Torrington, and Waterbury offices; and Bridgeport's public videophone is scheduled to be installed in April.
- Strategy: Continue the rate differential for Community Rehabilitation Providers who make their services accessible to individuals whose primary language is ASL.
 - Measure: utilization of the rate differential -
 - Since establishing the CRP Communication Rate Differential, the number of CRPs who provide services to consumers who are monolingual ASL users jumped from four CRPs to nine CRPs.

- Since establishing the CRP Differential Rate the number of CRP staff persons who meet our advanced ASL criteria within these documented CRPs jumped from eight Employment Specialists to 18 Employment Specialists. An additional three Employment Specialists know ASL, but do not meet our advanced criteria yet. They are receiving training and work alongside other staff or interpreters who meet our advanced ASL criteria.

Objective 3.3: To increase access to services for individuals whose primary language is Spanish.

- Strategy: Incorporate into our case management system the ability to translate forms into Spanish.
 - Measure: ability to produce all forms in Spanish -
 - The limitations of System 7 do not enable us to produce forms in Spanish. Staff access Spanish forms as needed using Microsoft Word files.
- Strategy: Continue the rate differential for Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) who make their services accessible to individuals whose primary language is Spanish.
 - Measure: utilization of the rate differential -
 - Since establishing the CRP Communication Rate Differential, the number of CRPs who provide services to consumers who are monolingual Spanish users jumped from zero CRPs to six CRPs.
 - Since establishing the CRP Differential Rate the number of CRP staff persons who meet our advanced Spanish criteria within these documented CRPs jumped from zero Employment Specialists to 12 Employment Specialists.
- Strategy: Make the BRS website information available in Spanish
 - Measure: # of hits to the Spanish forms within the website
 - There are no Spanish forms on the BRS Website. However, the Consumer Handbook and the Job Seeker Brochure are available in Spanish.

Objective 3.4: To increase access to transportation for Bureau consumers.

- Strategy: Partner with Connect-Ability staff to identify transportation resources and develop regional expertise.
 - Measure: # of counselors identified as transportation experts
 - One transportation expert has been identified in each region for a total of three in the state.

Objective 3.5: To decrease the wait time between 00 (initial inquiry for services) and 02 (application).

- Strategy: re-introduce status 00 to develop baseline measure.
 - Measure: # of days between 00 and 02 -
 - The limitations of System 7 do not currently allow the number of days between 00 and 02 to be tracked.

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

Priority areas:

- Businesses;
- Community Rehabilitation Providers; and
- State agencies.

Objective 4.1: Create partnerships with Businesses.

- Strategy: Increase the use of On-the-Job Trainings (OJTs).
 - Measure: # of OJTs negotiated -
 - 10/1/10 – 9/30/11 = 155 OJTs negotiated (previous year 89 OJTs). Represents an increase of approximately 75% of successfully negotiated employer agreements.
- Strategy: Implement Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs.
 - Measure: # of awards -
 - Five awards granted to:
 - Quinnebaug Valley ARC / Lowes Distribution Center
 - Community Enterprises / Mohegan Sun
 - Community Enterprises / Walgreens Retail Stores
 - Community Enterprises / Homegoods Distribution Center
 - Kennedy Center / CVS Retail
 - Measure: # of placements -
 - The grants were awarded starting in June 2011. Preparations began with some classes starting before September 2011. Actual placement numbers will not be available until the next plan submission.

Objective 4.2: Develop the capacity of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to meet the needs of BRS consumers, particularly those identified as being unserved or underserved in terms of service or access.

- Strategy: Establish a communication differential for CRPs serving individuals whose primary language is American Sign Language (ASL) or Spanish.
 - Measure: # of CRPs able to serve consumers whose primary language is American Sign Language (ASL) or Spanish -

- As described earlier, the CRP Communication Rate Differential for the number of CRPs who provide services to consumers who are monolingual ASL has more than doubled, as has the number of CRP staff persons who meet our advanced ASL criteria. We are pleased with the possible outcomes this strategy may create.
- As we had no CRPs who could provide services to consumers who were monolingual Spanish users and the CRPs had no staff who met the advanced Spanish criteria to provide this service, improvement in this area was drastically needed. We are glad that the CRPs responded to this strategy to improve service to this population and we hope to see continued success.

Objective 4.3: Partner with state agencies.

- Strategy: Work with Connect-Ability to implement employment-focused Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) with four state agencies.
 - Measure: MOA deliverables
- Implement capacity-development plans to create sustainable infrastructure change that supports employment of individuals with disabilities in the following state agencies:
 - **Department of Developmental Services (DDS)**
Assist Connecticut's DDS in taking a leadership role to improve employment services for individuals with developmental disabilities.

DDS hired four part-time consultants to work from April 1, 2011 - December 31, 2012 to support implementation of our employment goals. Three consultants oversee the development and implementation of a new employment specialist position in each of the three DDS regions (one consultant per region). A fourth consultant will oversee the work of the three regional consultants and to assist the DDS regional Self Determination Directors with implementation of agency employment goals and activities.

Conduct an employment marketing campaign to increase the number of DDS consumers being employed in the State of Connecticut.

Develop an Individual Plan (IP) Buddy Curriculum & Process.
Develop an Employment Idol Video II
Increase access to employment information for consumers with developmental disabilities

○ **Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)**

Assist DMHAS in taking a leadership role to improve employment services for individuals with mental health and substance abuse disabilities.

- EPIC –Employment Practice Improvement Collaborative 1 & 2 will build capacity of staff in multiple agencies to provide basic skills/soft skills and/or employment readiness life skills to young adults within state agency systems.
- As a result of the Connect-Ability Employment Practices Improvement Collaborative (EPIC) project, DMHAS has recognized skill gaps of young adults within its system. A more holistic approach is needed to ensure successful employment and educational outcomes for this age group. The results of these findings indicate that *basic skills/ soft skills/* and/or *employment readiness life skills* are critical elements of young people’s success for obtaining employment.
- A resource inventory will be completed to catalogue the best practices in promoting youth employment and the effectiveness of the Office of Disability Employment and Policy (ODEP) Soft Skills curriculum for the population. An evaluation of these tools to determine their viability relative to what is already available through the ODEP Soft Skills training curriculum will be completed.
- Revision of DMHAS’ Young Adult Services employment protocols to incorporate new skill building strategies.
- Develop a ‘train-the trainer’ model across agencies for Soft Skills curriculum delivery.
- Agency champions will be identified through existing Advisory Boards, with a shared vision for providing basic skills/soft skills/ and/or employment readiness life skills to young adults receiving state services in preparation for competitive employment. This group will meet once a quarter and will be used to sustain the project after funding.
- At least two partner agencies will train personnel on the use of KeyTrain software, which includes the National

Readiness Credential, as well as other existing work-readiness products.

- The final curriculum and protocols, including all materials for the Connect-Ability website and/or designated web-site, will be delivered via distance learning.
- Marketing/educational/outreach plan for employers designed and implemented to inform Connecticut employers on the National Workforce Readiness Credential and its value to the Connecticut workforce.

○ **Department of Social Services (DSS)**

Assist DSS to create a sustainable infrastructure change that supports employment of individuals with disabilities and improve employment services for all people with disabilities.

- SOCIAL WORK To modify marketing materials associated with Social Work (SW) division waivers and related programs including: updating logos or photos, incorporating Connect-Ability, and including employment-related information.
- INTERACTIVE WEB-BASED DESK GUIDE A web-based interactive desk guide about waivers, programs and policies will be developed as an internal resource for SW staff.
- TRAININGS Create and conduct cross-division training program for staff from SW, Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC), and BRS to disseminate information across divisions regarding:
 - a. Connect-Ability's employment message;
 - b. Social Work counseling services;
 - c. BRS employment-related services; and
 - d. ADRC counseling services.
- AGING SERVICES DIVISION - Technical Enhancements for ADRCs "Warm" transfer line technology will be implemented by each of the ADRC partner organizations to transfer caller in "warm" fashion toll-free to anywhere, specifically directly to C-A for employment advancement efforts.
- DEVELOP MARKETING MATERIALS FOR ADRCs with Connect-Ability. Marketing materials will be updated to

incorporate the Connect-Ability logos and information about the availability of employment services.

- THE COMMUNITY CHOICE COUNSELORS will track options and benefits provided to consumers including referrals to Connect-Ability, Vocational Rehab, and Assistive Technology as of October 1, 2010 to monitor employment referrals.
- ADRC COUNSELOR TRAINING & CERTIFICATION
 - All ADRC Community Choices (CC) counselors will complete the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) training and become certified to meet the high standard set by the CT ADRC program.
 - The goal of training is to have all ADRC CC counselor complete training and certification within one year of hire date.

○ **State Department of Education (SDE)**

Assist Connecticut's State Department of Education (SDE) in taking a leadership role to improve employment services for youths with disabilities.

- Create and disseminate disaggregated district-level Post School Outcome Survey (PSOS) data for purpose of informing transition-planning efforts.
- Create manual describing processes for allowing for continued annual use of dissemination procedures for disaggregated district-level data reports.
- Employ cross-categorical PSOS analysis to assist in identifying and addressing emergent themes.
- Provide technical assistance to districts in accessing and analyzing district-level PSOS data to inform program improvement decisions.
- Develop website and guidelines to assist in the provision of technical assistance school districts regarding identification and prioritizing proposed changes to LEA practices, policies, procedures and transition services based on student identified needs and data from the PSO survey.

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 services:

Connecticut Tech Act Project: The mission of the **Connecticut Tech Act Project** is to increase independence and improve the lives of individuals with disabilities through increased access to and acquisition of Assistive Technology (AT) devices for work, school, and community living. CT Tech Act services include:

- AT device demonstrations;
- AT device loans;
- AT recycling and refurbishment;
- Assistive Technology Loan Program, which provides low-interest financial loans for individuals with disabilities to buy AT devices and services;
- Training and Technical Assistance for counselors and consumers regarding the use of AT in employment settings; and
- Information and Referral

The Connecticut Tech Act Project continues to provide recycling through the website www.getATstuff.com, where devices can be listed and obtained for free or for a lower cost. Additionally, the Connecticut Tech Act Project continues to engage followers with information on Assistive Technology devices and services through the page on Facebook.

The Connecticut Tech Act Project added also continues to operate the AT Device Loan Program for BRS consumers, enhancing the inventory of devices and producing a visual inventory for consumers and counselors to peruse. BRS consumers may borrow an AT device from the inventory to use while they engage in working evaluations, on-the-job training or employment. The purpose of this loan program is to allow the consumer, VR counselor and employer to make an informed decision about the AT device and determine if the AT device will remove barriers and increase independence for the consumer as they perform their job duties. Since the start of this program in June 2010:

- 32 devices have been loaned to BRS consumers;
 - 15 loans resulted in consumers deciding that the device was appropriate and either he or she purchased it, BRS purchased it, or the employer provided it to the consumer.
 - 2 consumers decided on a different device as a result of the loan.
 - 15 consumers decided not to receive a device at all or the decision is still pending.

Other Connecticut Tech Act Project (CTTAP) highlights for FY2011 include the following:

- 12 AT Loans were approved, for a total of \$335,354; 8 loans were for vehicle modifications, one was for a computer, one was for environmental adaptations and two were for mobility devices.
- A total of 821 devices were recycled/refurbished
- A total of 184 devices were loaned to all CTTAP consumers
- 451 devices were demonstrated to a total of 705 individuals.
- 6482 individuals participated in trainings and public awareness events;
- Public awareness activities that include printed materials, such as newsletters, brochures, postcards, the CTTAP Web and the CTTAP's page on Facebook reached approximately 17,908 individuals;
- The CTTAP Program Director continues to act in the role of Assistive Technology Consultant to VR counselors and consumers and to participate in the BRS Case Conferencing Team to provide guidance around AT needs for VR consumers.

Strategies to address equitable access to services

The Bureau has met the RSA minority indicator for the last two years. However, we continue to monitor this indicator closely to ensure continued performance at the standard. Local plans will address community issues. Statewide, the Bureau will employ the following strategies:

- Identify best practices for providing culturally appropriate VR services. For the Latino population, we will use the Bureau's Latino committee to assist in the identification of best practices.
- 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.

Indicator 2.1 – Ratio of minority population to nonminority population ($\geq .80$) .83.

The bureau had a minority service rate that was .83 of the service rate for consumers from non-minority backgrounds. Therefore, we passed this Indicator.

Strategies for improving Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP)

- The Bureau has a sufficient number of 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.
- Gaps in services from the CRP community exist in populations where English is not the primary language, particularly those who use ASL or Spanish as their primary language. The Bureau is offering rate differentials and technical assistance to CRPs that wish to expand their capacity to provide services to people who are deaf or Spanish speaking.

- 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 will continue meetings of the CRP Committee to strengthen partnerships between BRS and CRPs.
- The Bureau will encourage use of a Consumer Choice Handbook for Assessment Services. This handbook offers descriptions of the individual components and purposes of individual services provided by CRPs.
- The Bureau will continue joint trainings of CRP and BRS staff to enhance better understanding of program implementation to achieve maximum success for consumers.

Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system to assist individuals with disabilities

- Most of the One Stop Centers have an assigned staff liaison from the Bureau.
- In four of the state's One Stop Career Centers, the Bureau's offices are co-located.
- The success of the initiative with the Walgreens Distribution Center has led to more industry-specific training projects as identified in Goal 4. We look forward to continued success in working with the Office of Workforce Competitiveness and the Department of Economic and Community Development.

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.

Supported Employment Goals

The goal for our Supported Employment program is to increase the numbers of consumers able to access supported employment services.

Supported Employment Strategies

We used the following strategies to accomplish the goals for Supported Employment:

- Continue to provide training to bureau staff, providers and other agencies providing supported employment services.
- Continue to reimburse Community Rehabilitation Providers at an hourly rate for their support for consumers using supported employment services.
- Continue to develop Best Practices/ Evidenced Based Practices for target populations receiving supported employment services

· Continue to seek additional avenues for long-term support for consumers that require supported employment services;

Impeding Factors for achieving goals and priorities

Supported employment training for bureau staff has helped to increase identification of individuals who meet the criteria for supported employment. Supported employment training has been re-aligned to support the SE goal to increase access to the service provision.

Consistent policies and practices in and between agencies administering supported employment programs continue to be a challenge for all stakeholders, including providers. Enhancing collaborative trainings and providing technical assistance is helping to bridge the gap. The newest initiative that the bureau is utilizing is the Distance Learning Initiative as a way to reach all community partners and consumers in promoting comprehensive service delivery.

3. Standards and Indicators

Of the Standards and Indicators not already listed above, the outcomes were as follows:

Indicator 1.3 – Of consumers who achieved employment, percent w/competitive employment: (>=72.6%) 100%

The bureau had a competitive outcome rate of 100%. Therefore, we passed this Indicator.

Indicator 1.4 – Of consumers who achieved competitive employment, percent w/significant disability: (>=62.4) 100%

The bureau had a competitive outcome/significant disability rate of 100%. Therefore, we passed this Indicator.

4. Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in FY 2011.

Use of Title 1 Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

The Bureau included two projects for Innovation and Expansion (I&E) under Title I funding:

- State Independent Living Council of CT (SILC) \$180,000
- State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) \$ 11,385

Total funding for Innovation and Expansion \$191,385

Description of Innovation and Expansion Projects

Innovation and expansion funding supported the State Independent Living Council (SILC) and State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

State Independent Living Council (SILC)

During fiscal year 2011, the State Independent Living Council (SILC) received \$180,000 in I & E funds to support the general operation of the Council. This then allowed all of the Title VII, Chapter 1, Part B monies to be used to support the goals and objectives of the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). Towards this end, the SILC achieved the following major initiatives in FFY 2011:

- sponsored the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) at UCONN, during which 40 high school students with disabilities from throughout CT attended a four-day training curriculum which focused on enhancing community leadership skills;
- provided support toward the development of a comprehensive Very Special Arts (VSA) website that includes:
 - a directory/registry of Connecticut visual and performing artists with disabilities;
 - an on-line gallery of visual art works by Connecticut artists with disabilities;
 - a directory of Connecticut teaching artists who work with artists with disabilities;
 - opportunities for artists with disabilities including professional development and mentoring;
- coordinated over 30 people to testify in support of Green Access and Metro Access accessible taxicab applications. Subsequent to the denial of this initiative by the Department of Transportation, SILC continued to coordinate information sharing for consumers and agencies on the need for the expansion of accessible taxicabs within Connecticut.
- supported Independence Unlimited's Visit-Ability initiative with funds to promote a Design Contest for youth and funds toward a resource book for housing developers and consumers; and
- supported the creation of fully accessible computer work stations for consumer use at four of the Centers for Independent Living. These stations will allow consumers who are blind or visually impaired and consumers with other significant physical disabilities the opportunity to become familiar with and access highly technical computers in the community.

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

In 2011, the SRC collaborated with BRS on the public meetings and the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). SRC members conducted a survey of the BRS offices to assess how easy the office was to find, how easy it was to park, how easy it was to enter the building and find staff that were knowledgeable about vocational rehabilitation services. Results were shared with BRS and formed the basis of recommendations to BRS this year. The SRC Chair participated in several national meetings and teleconferences. The SRC also contributed \$5,000 to the Youth Leadership Forum which included a scholarship to one of its graduating participants for the fourth year. See Attachment 4.2(c) for more information on the SRC.

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.

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

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) 2011. 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.

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.

Coordination and Collaboration

The 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. The Bureau oversees one of the three state-funded long-term supports programs and in SFY 2011 spent approximately \$1.1 million in serving VR consumers after VR services were completed. 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.