

# 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 2012 (submitted FY 2011)

## Preprint - Section 1: State Certifications

- 1.1 The **The Bureau of Rehabilitative Services, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services** is authorized to submit this State Plan under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended [1] and its supplement under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act [2].
- 1.2 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, the **The Bureau of Rehabilitative Services** [3] agrees to operate and administer the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program in accordance with the provisions of this State Plan [4], the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations [5], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and the administration of the State Plan for the vocational rehabilitation services program.
- 1.3 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated state agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the provisions of the supplement to this State Plan [6], the Rehabilitation Act and all applicable regulations [7], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the Title I State Plan.

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

- 1.7 The (enter title of state officer below)

Yes

State Treasurer

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

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

Yes

Director, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

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

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

Yes

State Plan Certified By

As the authorized signatory identified above, I hereby certify that I will sign, date and retain in the files of the designated state agency/designated state unit Section 1 of the Preprint, and separate Certification of Lobbying forms (Form ED-80-0013; available at <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/ed80-013.pdf>) for both the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

Signed?

Yes

Name of Signatory

Amy Porter

Title of Signatory

Director, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy)

08/19/2011

Assurances Certified By

The designated state agency and/or the designated state unit provide the following assurance(s) in connection with the approval of the State Plan for FY 2012

No

Comments:

Signed?

Name of Signatory

Title of Signatory

Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy)

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

Section 1 Footnotes

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

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

- [3] All references in this plan to "designated state agency" or to "the state agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.
- [4] No funds under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved State Plan in accordance with Section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR part 361.
- [5] Applicable regulations include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85 and 86 and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program regulations in 34 CFR Part 361.
- [6] No funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the Title I State Plan in accordance with Section 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- [7] Applicable regulations include the EDGAR citations in footnote 5, 34 CFR Part 361, and 34 CFR Part 363.

## **Preprint - Section 2: Public Comment on State Plan Policies and Procedures**

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

(a) Conduct of public meetings.

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

(b) Notice requirements.

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

(c) Special consultation requirements.

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

## **Preprint - Section 3: Submission of the State Plan and its Supplement**

### **3.1 Submission and revisions of the State Plan and its supplement. (Sections 101(a)(1), (23) and 625(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act; Section 501 of the Workforce Investment Act; 34 CFR 76.140; 361.10(e), (f), and (g); and 363.10)**

- (a) The state submits to the commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration the State Plan and its supplement on the same date that the state submits either a State Plan under Section 112 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 or a state unified plan under Section 501 of that Rehabilitation Act.
- (b) The state submits only those policies, procedures or descriptions required under this State Plan and its supplement that have not been previously submitted to and approved by the commissioner.
- (c) The state submits to the commissioner, at such time and in such manner as the commissioner determines to be appropriate, reports containing annual updates of the information relating to the:
  - 1. comprehensive system of personnel development;
  - 2. assessments, estimates, goals and priorities, and reports of progress;
  - 3. innovation and expansion activities; and
  - 4. other updates of information required under Title I, Part B, or Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act that are requested by the commissioner.
- (d) The State Plan and its supplement are in effect subject to the submission of modifications the state determines to be necessary or the commissioner requires based on a change in state policy, a change in federal law, including regulations, an interpretation of the Rehabilitation Act by a federal court or the highest court of the state, or a finding by the commissioner of state noncompliance with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361 or 34 CFR 363.

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

- (a) The state has an acceptable plan for carrying out Part B, of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act that provides for the use of funds under that part to supplement funds made available under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the cost of services leading to supported employment.
- (b) The Supported Employment State Plan, including any needed annual revisions, is submitted as a supplement to the State Plan.

## **Preprint - Section 4: Administration of the State Plan**

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

(a) Designated state agency.

1. There is a state agency designated as the sole state agency to administer the State Plan or to supervise its administration in a political subdivision of the state by a sole local agency.

2. The designated state agency

The designated state agency is:

A.  a state agency that is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities; or

B. a state agency that is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and includes a vocational rehabilitation unit as provided in paragraph (b) of this section.

3. In American Samoa, the designated state agency is the governor.

(b) Designated state unit.

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

A. is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and is responsible for the administration of the designated state agency's vocational rehabilitation program under the State Plan;

B. has a full-time director;

C. has a staff, at least 90 percent of whom are employed full-time on the rehabilitation work of the organizational unit; and

D. is located at an organizational level and has an organizational status within the designated state agency comparable to that of other major organizational units of the designated state agency.

2. The name of the designated state vocational rehabilitation unit is

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

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

The State Plan must contain one of the following assurances.

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

1. is responsible under state law for operating or overseeing the operation of the vocational rehabilitation program in the state and is primarily concerned with the vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(A) of this section.
2. is consumer controlled by persons who:
  - A. are individuals with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit major life activities; and
  - B. represent individuals with a broad range of disabilities, unless the designated state unit under the direction of the commission is the state agency for individuals who are blind;
3. includes family members, advocates or other representatives of individuals with mental impairments; and
4. undertakes the functions set forth in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4).

or

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

1. jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council develops, agrees to and reviews annually state goals and priorities and jointly submits to the commissioner annual reports of progress in accordance with the provisions of Section 101(a)(15) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.29 and subsection 4.11 of this State Plan;
2. regularly consults with the State Rehabilitation Council regarding the development, implementation and revision of state policies and procedures of general applicability pertaining to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services;
3. includes in the State Plan and in any revision to the State Plan a summary of input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including recommendations from the annual report of the council described in Section 105(c)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(5), the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction described in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4), and other reports prepared by the council and the response of the designated state unit to the input and recommendations, including explanations for rejecting any input or recommendation; and
4. transmits to the council:
  - A. all plans, reports and other information required under 34 CFR 361 to be submitted to the commissioner;
  - B. all policies and information on all practices and procedures of general applicability provided to or used by rehabilitation personnel in carrying out this State Plan and its supplement; and

C. copies of due process hearing decisions issued under 34 CFR 361.57, which are transmitted in such a manner as to ensure that the identity of the participants in the hearings is kept confidential.

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

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

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

- (a) individuals and groups of individuals who are recipients of vocational rehabilitation services or, as appropriate, the individuals' representatives;
- (b) personnel working in programs that provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;
- (c) providers of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;
- (d) the director of the Client Assistance Program; and
- (e) the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (a) a description of the nature and scope of the joint program;
- (b) the services to be provided under the joint program;
- (c) the respective roles of each participating agency in the administration and provision of services; and
- (d) the share of the costs to be assumed by each agency.

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

This agency is not requesting a waiver of statewideness.

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

1. nonfederal share of the cost of these services is met from funds provided by a local public agency, including funds contributed to a local public agency by a private agency, organization or individual;
  2. services are likely to promote the vocational rehabilitation of substantially larger numbers of individuals with disabilities or of individuals with disabilities with particular types of impairments; and
  3. state, for purposes other than the establishment of a community rehabilitation program or the construction of a particular facility for community rehabilitation program purposes, requests in Attachment 4.7(b)(3) a waiver of the statewideness requirement in accordance with the following requirements:
    - A. identification of the types of services to be provided;
    - B. written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the state unit the nonfederal share of funds;
    - C. written assurance that state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect; and
    - D. written assurance that all other State Plan requirements, including a state's order of selection, will apply to all services approved under the waiver.
- (c) Contributions, consistent with the requirements of 34 CFR 361.60(b)(3)(ii), by private entities of earmarked funds for particular geographic areas within the state may be used as part of the nonfederal share without the state requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement provided that the state notifies the commissioner that it cannot provide the full nonfederal share without using the earmarked funds.
- 4.8 Cooperation, collaboration and coordination. (Sections 101(a)(11), (24)(B), and 625(b)(4) and (5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.22, .23, .24, and .31, and 363.11(e))**
- (a) Cooperative agreements with other components of statewide work force investment system.
 

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

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

    1. cooperation with and use of the services and facilities of the federal, state, and local agencies and programs, including programs carried out by the undersecretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture and state use contracting programs, to the extent that those agencies and programs are not carrying out activities through the statewide work force investment system;

2. coordination, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 4.8(c) of this section, with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services;
3. establishment of cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.10(b) of the State Plan; and,
4. efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and entities with respect to the provision of supported employment and extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with the requirements of subsection 6.5 of the supplement to this State Plan.

(c) Coordination with education officials.

1. Attachment 4.8(b)(2) describes the plans, policies and procedures for coordination between the designated state agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students who are individuals with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under the responsibility of the designated state agency.
2. The State Plan description must:
  - A. provide for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with 34 CFR 361.45 as early as possible during the transition planning process but, at the latest, before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting; and
  - B. include information on a formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency that, at a minimum, provides for:
    - i. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to postschool activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;
    - ii. transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and the educational agency for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

- iii. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and
- iv. procedures for outreach to students with disabilities as early as possible during the transition planning process and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

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

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

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

1. There is in the state a recipient(s) of a grant under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing on or near federal and state reservations. **Yes**

2. If "Yes", the designated state agency has entered into a formal cooperative agreement that meets the following requirements with each grant recipient in the state that receives funds under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act:

A. strategies for interagency referral and information sharing that will assist in eligibility determinations and the development of individualized plans for employment;

B. procedures for ensuring that American Indians who are individuals with disabilities and are living near a reservation or tribal service area are provided vocational rehabilitation services; and

C. provisions for sharing resources in cooperative studies and assessments, joint training activities, and other collaborative activities designed to improve the provision of services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities.

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

(a) In general.

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

(b) Employment of individuals with disabilities.

The designated state agency and entities carrying out community rehabilitation programs in the state, who are in receipt of assistance under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and this State Plan, take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment

qualified individuals with disabilities covered under and on the same terms and conditions as set forth in Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act.

(c) Facilities.

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

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

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

(a) Data system on personnel and personnel development.

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

1. Qualified personnel needs.
  - A. The number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
  - B. The number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
  - C. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in five years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.
2. Personnel development.
  - A. A list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;
  - B. The number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
  - C. The number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

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

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

(c) Personnel standards.

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

1. standards that are consistent with any national- or state-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services.
2. To the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the state plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, the institutions of higher education identified in subparagraph (a)(2), and other public agencies of these steps and the time lines for taking each step.
3. The written plan required by subparagraph (c)(2) describes the following:
  - A. specific strategies for retraining, recruiting and hiring personnel;
  - B. the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards required by subparagraph (c)(1);
  - C. procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period; and
  - D. the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards and the identification of a plan for training such individuals to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

(d) Staff development.

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

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

(e) Personnel to address individual communication needs.

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

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

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

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

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

(a) Comprehensive statewide assessment.

1. Attachment 4.11(a) documents the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, jointly conducted every three years by the designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council (if the state has such a council). The assessment describes:

A. the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:

- i. individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- ii. individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under this State Plan; and
- iii. individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide work force investment system.

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

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

(b) Annual estimates.

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

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

(c) Goals and priorities.

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

(d) Strategies.

1. Attachment 4.11(d) describes the strategies, including:
  - A. the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities, including how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to those individuals at each stage of the rehabilitation process and how those services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis;
  - B. outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities in accordance with subsection 6.6 of the State Plan supplement, and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
  - C. as applicable, the plan of the state for establishing, developing or improving community rehabilitation programs;
  - D. strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
  - E. strategies for assisting other components of the statewide work force investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.
2. Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the designated state agency uses these strategies to:
  - A. address the needs identified in the assessment conducted under paragraph 4.11(a) and achieve the goals and priorities identified in the State Plan attachments under paragraph 4.11(c);
  - B. support the innovation and expansion activities identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) of the plan; and
  - C. overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Supported Employment Services Program.

(e) Evaluation and reports of progress.

1. The designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state unit has a council, jointly submits to the commissioner an annual report on the results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and the progress made in improving the effectiveness of the program from the previous year.
2. Attachment 4.11(e)(2):

- A. provides an evaluation of the extent to which the goals identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3) were achieved;
- B. identifies the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals and priorities;
- C. describes the factors that impeded their achievement, to the extent they were not achieved;
- D. assesses the performance of the state on the standards and indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
- E. provides a report consistent with paragraph 4.12(c) of the plan on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were utilized in the preceding year.

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

- (a) The designated state agency reserves and uses a portion of the funds allotted to the state under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the:
  - 1. development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this State Plan, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment identified in Attachment 4.11(a) and goals and priorities of the state identified in Attachments 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3); and
  - 2. support of the funding for the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 105(d)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(i), and the funding of the Statewide Independent Living Council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 705(e)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364.21(i).

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

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

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

- (a) The designated state unit submits reports in the form and level of detail and at the time required by the commissioner regarding applicants for and eligible individuals receiving services under the State Plan.
- (b) Information submitted in the reports provides a complete count, unless sampling techniques are used, of the applicants and eligible individuals in a manner that permits the greatest possible cross-classification of data and protects the confidentiality of the identity of each individual.

## **Preprint - Section 5: Administration of the Provision of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

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

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

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

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

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

- (a) The designated state unit is able to provide the full range of services listed in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the state who apply for services. No
- (b) If No:
  - 1. Individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with criteria established by the state, are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services before other individuals with disabilities.
  - 2. Attachment 4.11(c)(3):
    - A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
    - B. provides a justification for the order of selection; and
    - C. identifies the state's service and outcome goals and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
  - 3. Eligible individuals who do not meet the order of selection criteria have access to the services provided through the designated state unit's information and referral system established under Section 101(a)(20) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.37, and subsection 5.1 of this State Plan.

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

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

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

1. assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;
2. counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act;
3. referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide work force investment system, through agreements developed under Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act, if such services are not available under this State Plan;
4. job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;
5. rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids and devices; and
6. post-employment services consisting of the services listed under subparagraphs (1) through (5) of this paragraph.

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

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

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

provision of those vocational rehabilitation services during the pendency of any dispute that may arise in the implementation of the interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (a) The designated state unit conducts an annual review and reevaluation of the status of each individual with a disability served under this State Plan:
  - 1. who has achieved an employment outcome in which the individual is compensated in accordance with Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (29 U.S.C. 214(c)); or
  - 2. whose record of services is closed while the individual is in extended employment on the basis that the individual is unable to achieve an employment outcome in an integrated setting or that the individual made an informed choice to remain in extended employment.
- (b) The designated state unit carries out the annual review and reevaluation for two years after the individual's record of services is closed (and thereafter if requested by the individual or, if appropriate, the individual's representative) to determine the interests, priorities and needs of the individual with respect to competitive employment or training for competitive employment.
- (c) The designated state unit makes maximum efforts, including the identification and provision of vocational rehabilitation services, reasonable accommodations and other necessary support services, to assist the individuals described in paragraph (a) in engaging in competitive employment.
- (d) The individual with a disability or, if appropriate, the individual's representative has input into the review and reevaluation and, through signed acknowledgement, attests that the review and reevaluation have been conducted.

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

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

- (a) The federal share of the cost of construction for facilities for a fiscal year does not exceed an amount equal to 10 percent of the state's allotment under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for that fiscal year.
- (b) The provisions of Section 306 of the Rehabilitation Act that were in effect prior to the enactment of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 apply to such construction.
- (c) There is compliance with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.62(b) that ensure the use of the construction authority will not reduce the efforts of the designated state agency in providing other vocational rehabilitation services other than the establishment of facilities for community rehabilitation programs.

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

- (a) Contracts with for-profit organizations.  
The designated state agency has the authority to enter into contracts with for-profit organizations for the purpose of providing, as vocational rehabilitation services, on-the-job training and related programs for individuals with disabilities under Part A of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, upon the determination by the designated state agency that for-profit organizations are better qualified to provide vocational rehabilitation services than nonprofit agencies and organizations.
- (b) Cooperative agreements with private nonprofit organizations.  
Attachment 4.8(b)(3) describes the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

## **Preprint - Section 6: Program Administration**

### **Section 6: Program Administration**

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

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

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

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

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

Attachment 6.3 describes the quality, scope and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive supported employment services. The description also addresses the timing of the transition to extended services to be provided by relevant state agencies, private nonprofit organizations or other sources following the cessation of supported employment service provided by the designated state agency.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Preprint - Section 7: Financial Administration**

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

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

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

- (a) Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act are used by the designated state agency only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive such services.
- (b) Funds provided under Title VI, Part B, are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act, in providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment.
- (c) Funds provided under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act are not used to provide extended services to individuals who are eligible under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

## **Preprint - Section 8: Provision of Supported Employment Services**

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

- (a) Supported employment services are those services as defined in Section 7(36) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54).
- (b) To the extent job skills training is provided, the training is provided on-site.
- (c) Supported employment services include placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

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

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

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

- (a) An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.45 and .46 is developed and updated using funds under Title I.
- (b) The individualized plan for employment:
  - 1. specifies the supported employment services to be provided;
  - 2. describes the expected extended services needed; and
  - 3. identifies the source of extended services, including natural supports, or, to the extent that it is not possible to identify the source of extended services at the time the individualized plan for employment plan is developed, a statement describing the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that sources will become available.
- (c) Services provided under an individualized plan for employment are coordinated with services provided under other individualized plans established under other federal or state programs.

## **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 Public Meetings November 2010;
2. BRS Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA);
3. BRS State Plan;
4. BRS Transition Committee;
5. Connect-Ability Employment Summit 2010;
6. Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 Conference;
- 7 National Council of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) Conferences (2) and Teleconferences (6); and
8. SRC Meetings (six per year)
9. Review of Administrative Hearing Outcomes (2).

### **The Review and Analysis of Consumer Satisfaction**

BRS and the SRC hosted three public meetings in November 2010. The public meetings were held in Danbury, Hartford, and New Haven in preparation for the State Plan submission in 2011. More than 5,000 consumers received invitations via mail to attend the public meetings. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) partners were notified via electronic mailings.

Nine representatives of the SRC attended the public meetings to assess the effectiveness of the VR program by listening to consumer comments and questions. Amy Porter, BRS Director, responded to the consumer inquiries at each location. She was supported in this

endeavor by Bureau Chiefs Kathy Blewett and Dave Doukas; District Directors Lynn Frith – Northern Region and Kathy Marchione – Western Region; and Supervisors Dave Johnson, Alberto Montanez and Sharon Wright – Northern Region, Vicki Hill and Dan Lewis – Southern Region; and Fred Fachner – Western Region. Several Counselors, Consultants and Central Office staff also attended to support the public meetings.

In addition to attending the public meetings, anyone who could not attend, but wanted to share a comment or ask a question could send them by mail, e-mail, or fax. This period for written communication was extended beyond the dates of the public meetings in case someone was unable to attend the public meeting, but still wanted to submit their comments. Written comments were acknowledged and those that contained issues were passed on to District Directors for follow-up as needed. SRC members reviewed the summary of written comments.

In total about 50 people who were not staff or SRC members attended the public meetings. Approximately 84 comments or questions from all public and written comments were received during the 2010 public meetings and written comment period.

Several counselors were praised by name for the assistance they had provided to a specific consumer. Consumers who obtained hearing aids, assistive technology devices, or jobs that met their needs were pleased.

Some of the comments/questions asked for clarification about the VR process or suggested BRS needed to improve outcomes or interactions with consumers. The major themes in this category included the following:

- Job placements with benefits and career options are needed,
- Counselors need to stay better engaged with consumers (return calls and follow through);
- Veteran consumers have not netted desired results;
- Consumers need services other than VR to survive (housing, medical & other quality of life needs) and need better connection to other agencies;
- Improve vendor process for job developers-evaluators & CRP involvement;
- Explain/improve transition services;
- Transportation to find, keep jobs is needed;
- Better treatment needed for consumers with mental disabilities;
- Communication devices and better services needed for deaf consumers, and
- Stamford/Fairfield areas are left out.

Evaluations of the public meetings were also distributed to enable attendees to share feedback on the process and to make suggestions for improvements. Overall, the public meetings were well-received and BRS received positive feedback in several areas for the public meetings:

- Consumers could speak freely at the public meetings;
- Consumers were “heard”;
- Consumers appreciated one-to-one conversations;
- Everyone got a chance to speak;
- Open forum, friendly;
- Staff was cordial and caring;
- BRS listened to everyone
- Director remained tolerant/cool under pressure and made honest attempt to answer all questions and find suitable solutions.

Consumers would like to see public meeting held more often and see more people attend. Other suggestions to improve the public meetings included:

- BRS should make a presentation or have a panel discussion prior to taking questions from consumers;
- Contain consumers who tend to ramble;
- Limit side conversations of staff, they intimidated consumers;
- Meet in Stamford;
- Meet in the morning; and
- Provide refreshments.

### **SRC Recommendations to BRS**

This is the first year of a new Administration for the State of Connecticut. Despite increasing financial constraints, the SRC commends BRS’ commitment to continue the program innovations and services of last year. The SRC hopes that these new programs, such as on-the-job training continue for years to come.

Based on the BRS public forums, the SRC participation listed above, and the changed in the Administration, the following recommendations are offered:

#### **Recommendation 1 –**

As the new administration under Governor Malloy grapples with reducing the budget, it is considering combining different agencies and programs that serve people with disabilities. To help minimize any harmful impact on people with disabilities, the SRC recommends that BRS educate the new administration of the positive financial benefits of the VR programs to the overall economy, keep the SRC informed about any proposed changes in the overall services provided to people with disabilities, obtain input from the SRC about any proposed change, and assist the SRC in making its voice heard on any proposed changes.

**BRS Response:**

As of July 1, 2011, BRS will become part of a new Bureau of Rehabilitative Services. The new bureau will be headed by a Director, appointed by the Governor. When that new director is appointed, the leadership of the current BRS will provide a briefing on the services and programs within our structure, emphasizing the benefits of our programs to the overall economy. The SRC can also reach out on its own to the Governor or the new director. Current BRS leadership will keep the SRC informed about changes in structure. By law, any changes to services or policies would be shared with the SRC, and their input as well as public input would be sought. And while the current leadership will let the new director know about where the SRC fits into the overall picture, it will be up to the SRC to develop strategies for making its voice heard.

**Recommendation 2 –**

At the SRC meetings, it has been noted that the level of services and communication can vary from BRS office to BRS office. The Customer Satisfaction Committee is currently surveying how each BRS office initially treats its consumers. The SRC recommends to BRS that once the survey is complete BRS evaluate any discrepancies in the level of services and communication among its offices and work to establish a uniform way to deliver services and communications to consumers throughout the State.

**BRS Response:**

BRS is eager to hear the results of the SRC survey and will work with the SRC to develop a plan to address the findings.

**Recommendation 3 –**

During the most recent public meetings and in prior year's public meetings, it has been noted that consumers were treated differently based upon their disability (i.e. consumers with mental disabilities). It appears that BRS counselors have a better understanding of certain disabilities than others. The SRC recommends that BRS review its counselor training programs and its policies to insure that all BRS consumers are treated as equally as possible without regard to their particular disability.

**BRS Response:**

Testimony at public meetings is individualized, and our responsibility is to look for themes from the comments presented. We cannot say definitively that consumers were actually treated differently, only that there is a perception from some individuals who testified that they believed they did not receive adequate service.

With that said, we do have a statewide training program that is designed to address training needs of all VR staff in BRS. The training program is based on individual and agency needs, and supports the goals outlined in our state plan. To that end, trainings address service provision for different populations. In accordance with our state plan, specific focus areas include individuals with psychiatric disabilities, individuals who are deaf, individuals who are primarily Spanish speaking, individuals on the Autism spectrum, and young adults with disabilities.

**Recommendation 4 –**

Consumers attending the public meetings stated that they needed services other than those BRS provides in order to be competitively employed. As the new administration looks to optimize resources, the SRC recommends that BRS evaluate and explore how best to share referrals with other state agencies and advocacy organizations to better inform consumers about housing, transportation, and medical insurance so that consumers' needs outside of employment are met.

**BRS Response:**

We agree that consumers need services well beyond the scope of what our agency can provide. In accordance with the Rehab Act, we do provide Information and Referral services. We will continue to look for ways to best share referrals with other agencies and organizations.

**Recommendation 5 –**

The SRC has recommended in recent years that BRS employ the use of video phones in its offices to help its counselors better serve those consumers who are deaf. BRS is working with its parent agency to ensure the use of video phones in each of its regional offices. The SRC recommends that BRS complete this project this year.

**BRS Response:**

We agree that access to videophones is a critical need, and we have been working for many years to make this happen within our larger Department. We will work to finalize the installation of the videophones, but may have additional issues arise if our office locations change under our new agency structure.

**Recommendation 6 –**

The consumers have indicated that they would like more public meetings in more locations. The SRC recommends that BRS, in conjunction with the SRC, hold public meetings that cover three additional locations for a total of six per year.

**BRS Response:**

We would be willing to consider additional public meetings, but would like to be clear about the cost benefit, as attendance at recent public meetings has not been very high.

**Recommendation 7 –**

In the public forum, issues were raised regarding the understanding and implementation of transition services. The SRC recommends that all BRS counselors are trained regarding the RESC Transition initiative and transition planning from the perspective of school districts and families.

**BRS Response:**

The new initiative was not fully implemented at the time of the public meetings, but there have been trainings in each of the regions and all BRS staff have been able to participate.

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

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

The waiver request should also include:

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

This agency has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

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

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

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

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

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

#### **A. The Department of Social Services (DSS)**

DSS is the former designated state agency for the vocational rehabilitation (VR) and supported employment programs. The designated state agency changed July 1, 2011, when BRS was merged with the Board of Education and Services for the Blind, the Commission on Deaf and Hearing Impaired, and the Worker's Rehabilitation Services to form the new Bureau of Rehabilitative Services. The VR program now operates under a Memorandum of Agreement with DSS for Administrative Purposes Only (APO). DSS continues to house many of the offices where VR staff work.

We also maintain collaborations with other program divisions within DSS. It enables coordination of additional services for individuals with significant disabilities with the Family Services Unit in the Bureau of Assistance Programs responsible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) policy for the following programs: Temporary Family Assistance, Jobs First Employment Services, Employment Success, and Transportation for Economic Independence. The Bureau of Aging, Community, and Social Work Services provides a partnership when working on employment opportunities for individuals in the Adult Services Unit, specifically the nursing facility transition program.

The Department of Social Services adopted a Universal Design Model to make reasonable accommodations for individuals needing DSS services. BRS collaborated with the TANF Program to hire four state-funded TANF/VR Counselors. These counselors screen TANF consumers subject to sanctions for not complying with their employment

plans. These screenings are done at the conciliation interview. As part of that process, consumers are offered the opportunity to be screened in one or more of these three areas: Mental Health, Substance Abuse and/or Learning Disabilities.

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

### **B. The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)**

BRS and DMHAS co-fund an Education Consultant position through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). This consultant is the liaison between the vocational rehabilitation agency and the mental health staff and spends a considerable amount of time on supported employment training and initiatives across systems.

Three additional Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) were executed that enabled BRS to pilot the embedding of three VR counselors within the clinical teams of three local mental health authorities (LMHA). One of the three counselors continues to be embedded in the LMHA after three years. At this site, the VR counselor and the clinical team collaborate to better serve individuals with significant psychiatric disabilities. At the other two sites, the VR counselors provide consultation and direct services through frequent on-site visits.

### **C. Cooperative Agreements under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)**

BRS and the VR program for individuals who are blind are collaborating with other partners in the workforce system on a statewide on-the-job-training (OJT) model to market to employers using the additional stimulus funds.

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

### **D. Walgreens Project**

The bureau's MOA with four state agencies to develop a unified and cooperative effort to refer and train individuals with disabilities at Connecticut's Walgreens Distribution Center will end December 2011. The bureau, along with the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB), DDS, the Department of Labor (DOL), and the State Department of Education (SDE), have implemented and maintained a training program on-site at the Walgreens Distribution Center.

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

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

Due to the merger described earlier, we no longer need a MOA to work with the VR program for individuals who are blind. However, during this period of transition (through June 30, 2012), we will continue to follow the previously established MOA which outlines services to be provided for consumers in instances where individuals meet the eligibility criteria for both VR programs.

**F. Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI)**

Due to the merger described earlier, we no longer need a MOA to work with CDHI. However, during this period of transition (through June 30, 2012), we will continue to follow the previously established MOA which sets forth the terms and conditions for purchasing certified sign language interpreting services. The MOA established rates, scheduling, and cancellation procedures.

This screen was last updated on Aug 23 2011 8:15AM by Evelyn Knight

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

- Describe the designated state unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including provisions for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or, if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection, before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting.
- Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency with respect to
  - consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;
  - transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs;
  - roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
  - procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

### **Coordination with Education Officials**

#### **A. Higher Education**

In April, 2006, BRS, the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB), and the Connecticut State University

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

#### **B. High School**

BRS has been working with multiple state agencies and workforce partners to enhance the service provision for young adults transitioning from high school to work. BRS follows the federal regulations from RSA regarding comparable services and is guided by our agency policies on transition services when students with disabilities transition from

school to VR services. These policies include developing an employment plan that specifies what services and supports BRS will provide directly upon graduation from high school. The bureau's training grant focuses resources on the procedures for counselors to follow, as each counselor is assigned one or more schools to cover within each of Connecticut's 143 districts that provide secondary services.

These procedures describe the funding of services, the questions that counselors should consider in making decisions, and the parameters for funding or co-funding services. They also describe the relationship with the State Department of Education (SDE), and encourage counselors to contact the transition consultant to resolve any issues that arise.

To this end, we have the following agreements:

- The bureau has a MOA to co-fund a full-time transition consultant with the SDE. The consultant sits on the bureau's Transition Committee, trains new BRS staff, and provides ongoing technical assistance.

This formal MOA describes the responsibilities of the transition consultant, which include consultation and technical assistance between the bureau and the State Department of Education. The transition consultant also coordinates the transition planning between the two agencies. Beyond these roles and responsibilities, the MOA includes financial responsibilities of the two agencies, as well as outreach and identification strategies.

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

- BRS has liaison counselors assigned to each high school in Connecticut as well as the other agencies providing alternative public education.

#### Transition Partnership

BRS partnered with the State Department of Education, the Regional Educational Service Centers, the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC), and the State Education Resource Center (SERC) to develop the **Regional Education Service Center (RESC)/State Education Resource Center (SERC) Transition Resource Counselor**

**Initiative.** This initiative will help develop effective working partnerships between BRS and local education agencies; coordinate services for students and families regarding employment; increase capacity for RESCs/SERCs to collaborate on vocational rehabilitation services; and develop a plan to sustain this collaboration. Each RESC and SERC hired a Transition Resource Counselor to identify supports and services available through BRS and other state adult service agencies.

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

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

#### Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

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

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

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

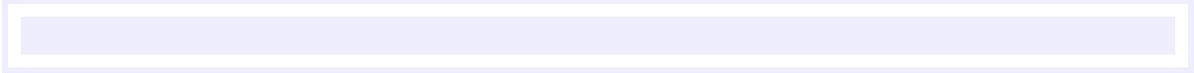
- supported employment services; and
- extended services.

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

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

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

- Continue individually developed supported employment plans with consumers;
- Continue to reimburse Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) at an hourly rate for their support for consumers using supported employment services; and
- Implement an Interagency Employment Practice Improvement Collaborative for staff in BRS, DMHAS, and CRPs designed to increase successful employment outcomes to an underserved target population.
- Establish a menu of programs that can provide ongoing supports and services to consumers including the Ticket Program and the Employment Opportunities Program;
- Administer Partnership Plus Agreements with Employment Networks (ENs);
- Provide technical assistance to ENs and providers of EOP;



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## 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 system, the bureau uses System 7 for caseload management and results of ongoing needs assessments to analyze personnel needs on an annual basis.

The bureau has been approved for 171 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions. As of August 2011, 157 positions were filled. The number and type of BRS positions are identified in the personnel chart below.

The bureau currently has 68 of 76 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 8,053 consumers in FY2010. With 76 VR counselors, the ratio of VR counselors to all consumers is 1:106. The ratio of VR supervisors to consumers is 1:895. The ratio of all staff to consumers is 1:51. Of the 8,053 total annual consumers, 4,464 developed an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The ratio of staff to consumers who developed an IPE is different: 76 VR counselors to all consumers with an IPE is 1:59; VR supervisors to consumers with an IPE is 1:496; and all staff to consumers with an IPE is 1:28.

#### Current Need for Staff

The bureau has added nine VR counselor positions and one central office consultant to meet the added opportunities resulting from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). These new VR counselor positions have helped to mitigate the effects of staff losses resulting from the July 2009 retirements when BRS lost over 17% of VR counselors. Even though BRS has been permitted to refill many of the positions lost due to the above mentioned retirements, internal promotions and other occasions of attrition have resulted 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 support staff that may need to occur as a result of implementing System 7, the new MIS program. System 7 is a comprehensive data, fiscal management and

electronic case management information system. It replaces the bureau's previous system that was restricted to data collection and fiscal management only.

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Administrative Fiscal Secretarial Support Staff	34	1	6
2	Central Office Consultants	15	0	3
3	Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC)	7	1	1
4	District Directors	3	0	0
5	Managers	3	0	1
6	Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisors	9	0	3
7	Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors	76	8	10
8				
9				
10				

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

- a list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;
- the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

### Personnel Development

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

The following 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	90	0	9	10
2					
3					
4					
5					

### Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

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

### Recruitment

The bureau 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 graduate students who intern with BRS;
- increase the number of consumers we help to go into the rehabilitation counseling profession; and
- increase newspaper recruitment, including newspapers that serve diverse populations, and continue online nation-wide recruitment.

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

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

In those instances when the bureau hires a counselor with a related Bachelor's degree as previously defined, a 48-credit Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling will be required. 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 85 staff positions required to meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Standards; 76 counselors and nine supervisors. As of this writing, eight counselor positions are 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.

Fourteen 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 33 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 (2010);
- 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 meet 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, 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.

#### New 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
- Russian – Southern
- 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. 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.

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## **Attachment 4.11(a) Statewide Assessment**

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

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

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

### **Approach to the 2010 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment**

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) published new guidelines in the fall of 2009 for conducting a three-year Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), scheduled to submit the results of the CSNA in July 2010 as part of the annual State Plan submission, established a committee of representatives of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and bureau staff to finalize the assessment report. Committee members reviewed the new guidelines and developed a strategy to follow the new reporting outline with the results of our comprehensive assessment. This approach would enable us to get in synch with RSA's expectations and set us on the course for the next three-year assessment schedule. The CSNA provides the blue print to evaluate the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs according to the outline listed in Section III of full CSNA report.

### **Background**

The environment in which Connecticut's vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs operate has changed dramatically since our last Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) submitted in 2007. The first major change related to staffing. BRS was faced with a statewide retirement program, through which a significant number of experienced staff retired. The bureau lost 21 staff to retirements in addition to regular attrition, which claimed an additional six staff in the months surrounding the enactment of the retirement program. The total impact was an overall 17% decrease in staff that included a significant number of leadership and senior level positions. These staff losses presented a particular challenge in the area of direct consumer services as 14 vocational rehabilitation counselor positions were vacated. The second major change relates to the economy. As with the rest of the nation, we are experiencing a recession that has had a negative impact on employment opportunities. According to an April 2010 news release from the Connecticut Department of Labor, non-farm employment is down 97,000 jobs from its pre-recession peak employment of 1,711,500 in March 2008. This represents a decline of 5.7%. Overall, Connecticut is facing an unemployment rate over 9%.

A third major change relates to the implementation of a new Management Information System. In October of 2009 “VR System 7” replaced the “Integrated Client Information System” (ICIS) as the bureau’s primary information management tool. ICIS had been in production in the bureau since 1985 and was limited in terms of its caseload management capabilities. The implementation of System 7 not only brought forth major challenges in terms of capturing business requirement that had previously been executed via paper-driven processes, but it also required many staff at all levels of the agency with limited computer skills to adapt to an electronic caseload management tool. System 7 houses all consumer case information, processes fiscal transactions related to client purchase of services, maintains statistical data and is designed to support the most business processes of the bureau. Although an enormous amount of time and effort have been invested in the successful implementation of the system and the training of staff, both technical and end-user issues significantly impacted the statistical, fiscal and qualitative performance of the bureau throughout FFY 2010 and FFY2011. It is expected that with ongoing collaboration with the contracted MIS vendor and continued end-user support these issues will diminish over time.

These challenges have been coupled with a number of significant opportunities, including the infusion of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding, strong business partnerships, and marketing efforts at the state and national level. Through ARRA, BRS received \$2.4 million for vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs under Title 1, Part B of the Rehabilitation Act. This funding has enabled BRS to develop innovative strategies to improve employment outcomes for Connecticut residents with disabilities. Six Employment Consultants within BRS’s newly created Employment Division were hired to outreach specifically to employers. An essential function of their role is to enhance existing collaborations with other state and community-based agencies and service providers to increase job opportunities for our consumers.

The opening of the Walgreens Distribution Center in Windsor, CT provided a blue print for other companies to follow. Walgreens exceeded its goal to hire individuals with disabilities in at least 1/3 of its positions. Special recruitment and training was established to ensure success. BRS, Connect-Ability, and two local community rehabilitation providers (CRP) have collaborated to create a similar model at Lowe’s in Plainfield, CT. Roses for Autism in Guilford, CT has also developed a model. BRS and Connect-Ability continue to explore the flexibility of these and other models for other prospective employers, including ESPN, The Prudential, and Travelers Insurance.

The Connect-Ability media campaign, funded by our Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, has helped to promote consumers with significant disabilities to successfully work competitively in a variety of vocational fields. There is also a national marketing campaign titled “Think Beyond the Label” that adds to the reach of Connecticut’s marketing efforts. This publicity, coupled with the annual Connect-Ability Employment Summit, has helped to increase employer interest in hiring consumers who have disabilities and to educate employers about overcoming barriers that may hinder hiring consumers with disabilities.

### **Data Sources**

BRS used many of the data sources recommended in the CSNA Guide. The CSNA committee evaluated results of surveys and interviews to obtain feedback from consumers, family members and other valued partners in the VR system to garner concerns, issues, and successes about the VR and SE programs as follows: • BRS Public Meetings Feedback; • State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Survey Results; • Results of a Consumer Survey; • Results of Key Informant Survey; • Results of a Counselor Survey; and • Results of CRP Comments.

In addition to the feedback generated by the groups listed above, the CSNA committee also reviewed Existing Data from the following sources: • Annual Review of Report to RSA (a combination of federal reports), 2008 • State Population: Census, ACS • Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, 2009 • CT Department of Labor, Labor Market Information, March 2010 • US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008-18 Projections • Connecticut State Department of Education Data on Youth with Disabilities • 704 Report of State Independent Living Services Program.

## **Methods**

**Public meetings:** During the public meeting process in 2007, 2008 and 2009, consumers were invited to attend a public meeting in their regions to discuss specific topics or general concerns. This enabled all attendees to have questions answered or to provide comment. All questions and comments received at the public meetings received an immediate response, accompanied by follow up steps, as appropriate. Consumers who could not attend the meetings had additional time to submit written comments or questions by e-mail, fax, or postal mail. Supervisors and counselors were available to continue detailed/personal discussions in private, as needed. All written responses received an acknowledgement that their communication had been received and their comments would be added to others that had been submitted. Written communications that included concerns or issues were forwarded to the Regional Director for follow-up and resolution with the consumer and their counselor (or counselor's supervisor), if needed. As with other information presented by BRS, consumers were referred to the Client Assistance Program (CAP), as desired.

**Office Consumer Satisfaction Surveys:** Through the SRC, consumer satisfaction feedback with office visits was monitored. Following a meeting with a counselor, consumers had an opportunity to share their satisfaction regarding the treatment they received, satisfaction with access to the building, and satisfaction with the information shared at the meeting. This on-going snapshot of individual consumers identified recurring themes that needed to be addressed as well as confirmed positive and appropriate staff interactions. Consumers were given the survey to complete in the office or return by mail in a postage-paid envelope. District Directors first reviewed the surveys to determine if any issues existed that needed immediate attention. Lastly, the SRC Consumer Satisfaction Committee reviewed the surveys to determine trends/issues to evaluate for recommendations to BRS. Survey results were discussed at every SRC meeting. This approach enabled the SRC to obtain a sense of daily interactions between counselors and consumers. BRS addressed findings to improve service to our consumers.

**Consumer Satisfaction Mail Survey:** A mail survey was conducted as part of the CSNA. A four-page survey was developed by BRS in consultation with the University of

Connecticut's Health Center to assess overall satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services. While the survey results were anonymous, consumers could identify themselves if they wanted to speak with someone about their experience at BRS. The consumer satisfaction survey examined two different populations: VR cases that were closed in fiscal year 2009 and open VR cases. Based on a random sampling of potential respondents, 414 consumers with closed cases were surveyed (239 non-minority and 175 minority, of which 72 clients identified as Latino) and 347 consumers with open cases (231 non-minority and 116 minority clients, of which 40 were Latino) were surveyed. Surveys were sent by mail along with an invitation to participate and a self-addressed, postage-paid reply envelope. Measures were included to ensure Latino consumers had access to the survey in Spanish, if needed.

**Key Informant Interviews:** The committee identified 14 individuals with unique perspectives on the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs and/or the consumers BRS serves. These individuals were interviewed by CSNA committee members. District Directors interviewed a small sample of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) to gather their perspectives, as well.

**Counselor Surveys:** BRS counselors received an open-ended, 13-question survey by e-mail. The survey solicited the following information based on each counselor's experience: 1. What are the service needs of individuals with significant and most significant disabilities; 2. Who are unserved/underserved populations and what are their service needs; 3. How effective are our Community Rehabilitation Providers and what is needed to improve their effectiveness and strengthen our relationships; 4. How accessible are supported employment services and what barriers need to be removed; 5. How effective are the partnerships we have with other state agencies who serve our consumers and how can we streamline the process to improve service; 6. What recommendations can you make to remove barriers and increase access to services for our consumers? General knowledge of BRS participation in statewide committees and status of ongoing programs, projects, and partnerships have also been considered in the CSNA.

## **Results**

Based on the results of the CSNA, the bureau will strive to improve services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, individuals with disabilities who are minorities; individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program; and individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system. The Bureau considered the following themes in the development of the agency goals and priorities: 1. increase collaborations with other businesses, state agencies, workforce investment boards and community-based service agencies; 2. participate in cross-training with other state agencies – the Departments of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and Developmental Services (DDS), the Autism Pilot – to assure understanding of system differences and options for improved continuity for mutually-served consumers; 3. provide equal access to services with information in alternate formats for consumers whose primary language is not English (American Sign Language [ASL] and Spanish in particular); 4. develop counseling staff knowledge and skills regarding specific consumer populations (consumers with Autism, consumers with mental illness, young adults and minority consumers); 5. increase the Bureau's presence in the community and an

awareness of community resources; and 6. investigate transportation options to assist consumers in finding and keeping employment. Based on the results of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment, the bureau will strive to improve community rehabilitation programs within the state as follows: 1. use establishment grants for the purposes of establishing new programs of service within existing CRPs; 2. offer rate differentials and technical assistance to CRPs that wish to expand their capacity to provide services to people who are deaf or Spanish speaking; 3. continue joint trainings of CRP and BRS staff to enhance better understanding of program implementation to achieve maximum success for consumers; 4. continue meetings of the CRP Committee to strengthen partnerships between BRS and CRPs; 5. encourage use of a Consumer Choice Handbook for Assessment Services. These themes were used to inform the Bureau's state plan goals, priorities and strategies.

This screen was last updated on Aug 11 2011 3:13PM by Evelyn Knight

## **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 3,456,856 civilian residents who were non-institutionalized in 2009. From this number, 2,190,066 persons were 18-64 years of age; 8.4% of this population, 184,259 persons, had a disability (margin of error +/-0.3%).

Records from 2009 also show of the 335,456 non-institutionalized people with disabilities over age 16, only 26.7% were employed. The remaining 68.1% 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 26.7% 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) 2011, the bureau projects that it will serve 4,750 eligible consumers in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act. This is a 6.4% increase from FFY 2010, when 4,464 individuals received services under an IPE.

The Bureau has been engaged in an 18 month 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 efforts toward recruitment and ongoing training of newer staff we do expect to see a significant increase in the numbers of consumers served in FFY 2012. Barring another incident that results in unexpected loss of staff, the Bureau reasonably projects that 5,070 consumers will be served under an IPE in FFY 2012. This represents a 9% increase over the FFY 2011 projection.

During FFY 2010, the bureau purchased services for 43 Consumers under Title VI part B of the Act, utilizing \$78,170. This represents the second consecutive year in which BRS significantly decreased the numbers served and amount of Title VI-B funds used. In FFY 2009, the bureau spent \$175,312 while serving 109 Consumers. This was a 41% decline when compared to 2008 expenditures.

Throughout FFY 2011, the bureau has served individuals and utilized Title VI-B funds at a pace significantly higher than the FFY 2010 expenditure level. The bureau projects to provide purchased services for 115 consumers within FFY 2011 using Title VI-B with a total projected expenditure of \$255,000.

Based upon historical data, of the 5,070 individuals projected to receive services in FFY 2012, the bureau anticipates that 178 could potentially be funded under part B of Title VI. [\[aname="OLE\\_LINK2"\]](#) Although the bureau has already been engaged in specific training of all staff related to the utilization of Title VI-B funds, it is apparent that the bureau must continue to undergo an intensive training effort to educate newer staff on the need to properly identify Supported Employment cases and the utilization of the dedicated funding for this population. This training will continue to occur for the remainder of FFY 2011 and as a result, the continued trend toward full Title VI-B fund utilization is expected.

[/a]

The bureau has been operating in an order of selection for several years now, serving only all Priority 1 (most significant) and Priority 2 (significant) consumers. Historically, approximately 60% of eligible individuals served meet the criteria for most significant disability, with the remaining 40% meeting the significant disability criteria. Although American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding and reallocation of FFY 2010 Title I funding has provided additional resources, the bureau has made an agency

decision to not open Order of Selection at this time due to the availability of current staffing resources. Significant increases in consumers served from Priority 1 and Priority 2 are projected for FFY 2012. As our newer counseling staff becomes sufficiently trained 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.

### Costs of Services

Title I purchase of services (POS) costs for Priority 1 and Priority 2 consumers in FFY 2011 is projected to be approximately \$11.5 million. In addition to a traditional POS expenditure of \$8.5 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 in the final quarter of FFY 2011 and beyond. By the conclusion of FFY 2011 the Bureau will have invested \$1.8 million in serving significant numbers of consumers by funding their participation in Industry Specific Training Programs, Summer Youth Employment Programs, and Prep Rally events geared toward readiness for upcoming job fairs and job interviews. In addition to the above, the bureau has also entered into 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 \$1.2 million on this project over the course of FFY 2011.

Through traditional POS and client services occurring within the scope of the projects outlined above, the bureau projects to expend \$12.5 million in FFY 2012. This projection is predicated on an overall 9% growth in consumers served and successful continuation and targeted expansion of the projects mentioned above.

Category	Title I or Title VI	Estimated Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
Most Significant	Title I	\$7,233,800	2,927	\$2,471
Significant	Title I	\$5,011,200	2,028	\$2,471
Most Significant	Title VI	\$255,000	115	\$2,217
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				—
<b>Totals</b>		<b>\$12,500,000</b>	<b>5,070</b>	<b>\$2,465</b>

This screen was last updated on Aug 23 2011 8:15AM by Evelyn Knight

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

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

- Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.
- Identify if the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, jointly reviewed the goals and priorities and jointly agreed to any revisions.
- Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.
- Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
  - the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
  - the performance of the state on standards and indicators; and
  - other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

### Goals and Priorities

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

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

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

*Priority areas:*

- customer service and provision of information

- ongoing skill development
- case management in an electronic system

**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
- individuals with autism spectrum disorders

**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
- timeliness of access to initial appointment

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

*Priority areas:*

- Businesses
- Community Rehabilitation Providers
- State agencies

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

### **Attachment 4.11(c)(3) Order of Selection**

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

#### **Justification for order of selection**

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

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

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

elsewhere, rather than going onto a waiting list. We currently have 17 consumers on our OOS Waiting List in Priority 3.

The Bureau reviews its OOS status annually. This review takes into account the information obtained from our comprehensive needs assessment and our strategic planning process. The Bureau's current strategic plan includes a set of goals and priorities designed to increase services to individuals in Priority 1 and 2. In particular, the Bureau is focused on specific target populations, including individuals from minority backgrounds, individuals with psychiatric disabilities, individuals on the autism spectrum, and young adults with disabilities. While the Bureau has increased its focus in these areas, our triennial assessment shows we still have an ongoing need for individuals in these priority areas.

### **Capacity Projections**

Although adequate financial resources are in place, the Bureau does not have the human resources necessary to increase services to individuals in Priority 3. In fact, the bureau's capacity to adequately provide services to individuals in Priority 1 and Priority 2 was significantly challenged over FFY 2010. Results for FFY 2011 display only a partial recovery compared to 2009 levels as the following challenges still exist:

1. time and effort to fill vacant positions;
2. time to orient and train new staff as they develop proficiency;
3. loss of available local office space within active communities;
4. lengthy delays in finding alternative locations;
5. efforts to successfully convert and adjust to all components of a new Management Information System implemented October 2009; and
6. significant staff time from all levels of the agency to test functionality and ensure business requirements are met.

It is expected that this investment will continue to be required throughout the remainder of FFY 2011.

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

### **Description of Priority categories**

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

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

SECOND – All eligible individuals determined to have a significant disability.

THIRD – All other eligible individuals.

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

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

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

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

#### **Priority of categories to receive VR services under the order**

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

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

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

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

All eligible consumers receiving services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) as of the end of business on June 30, 1994, regardless of their priority status,

continued to receive services as necessary until the attainment of their vocational goals and/or closure of their cases. For individuals who began receiving services under an IPE after June 30, 1994, the bureau has been able to serve all individuals in Priority Categories 1 and 2 (i.e. those individuals determined to have either a Significant or Most Significant Disability) since November 1994. The bureau will continue to serve all individuals in Priority Categories 1 and 2 to the extent that resources are available. The bureau will continue to carefully assess this situation.

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

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

#### **Time Frames**

All priority groups will have a determination of eligibility within 60 days unless there are mutually agreed upon extensions. For those not on the waiting list (Priority Group 3) employment plans will be developed and, on average, individuals will be in service within 90 days of eligibility. Delays for legitimate planning purposes will be well documented. Since the bureau is serving both Priority 1 and Priority 2 and no change is anticipated, this projection holds for both groups. Nineteen months is the average anticipated time frame for successful completion of the rehabilitation process for individuals in Priority 1 and Priority 2 with positive employment outcomes. This average is expected to rise as a greater portion of our agency caseload is expected to be comprised of transition-aged consumers who typically receive services for a longer period of time.

#### **Formula Used for Service Outcome Goals**

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

Utilizing FFY 2009 performance as a baseline:

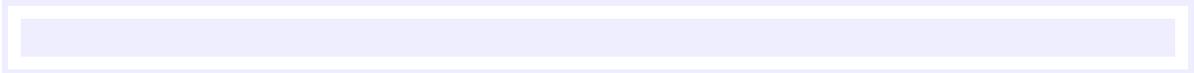
Goal 1,117

Anticipated rehabilitation rate = .56

Historic percentage of cases closed = .42

Thus:

$1,117 / .56 / .42$



Priority Category	Number of individuals to be served	Estimated number of individuals who will exit with employment after receiving services	Estimated number of individuals who will exit without employment after receiving services	Time within which goals are to be achieved	Cost of services
1	2,850	670	527	Nineteen months	\$5,829,000
2	1,900	447	351	Nineteen months	\$3,886,000
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

This screen was last updated on Aug 23 2011 8:15AM by Evelyn Knight

#### **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.

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.

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

In FFY2010, the Bureau again explored a variety of funding options to ensure extended services to persons in the program beyond Title VI, part B. The Bureau enhanced the

supported employment program by **continuing** Social Security's Ticket to Work Partnership Plus Program as an additional resource for consumers to engage in long-term employment supports. The Partnership Plus Program makes available to consumers a variety of long-term employment supports and helps to increase funding to providers of services.

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

Bureau staff continues to actively seek long-term employment supports for our qualified consumers from the Department of Mental Health, Addiction Services, the Department of Developmental Services and maintenance of the Employment Opportunities Program.

This screen was last updated on Aug 23 2011 8:15AM by Evelyn Knight

## Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies

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

- Describe the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.
- Identify how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process.
- Describe how assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis.
- Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities.
- Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.
- Identify plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs, if applicable.
- Describe strategies to improve the performance with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators.
- Describe strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.
- Describe how the agency's strategies will be used to:
  - achieve the goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1);
  - support innovation and expansion activities; and
  - overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the state Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the state Supported Employment Services Program.

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 will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the vocational rehabilitation and the supported employment programs.

We have also incorporated preliminary measures to be sure that the strategies are effective.

**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
- 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.
- o Measure: rehabilitation rate (standards and indicators 1.2)
- o Measure: consumer wage comparison to state averages (standards and indicators 1.5)
- o Measure: primary source of support (standards and indicators 1.6)

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

- Strategy: Develop materials and post on the BRS website
- o Measure: of website hits
  
- Strategy: Develop materials and post on the Connect-Ability website
- o Measure: of website hits

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
- o Measure: consumer satisfaction

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
- o Measure: counselor survey, consumer satisfaction

**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
- 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.
- o Measure: rehabilitation outcomes (standards and indicators 1.1)

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
- o Measure: rehabilitation rate for individuals with ethnicity identified as Hispanic

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

- Strategy: cross-training on new Learning Disability guidelines and transition toolkit
- o Measure: training evaluations
  
- Strategy: Partner with State Dept of Ed and community partners to conduct training and outreach activities with school districts throughout the state
- o Measure: of employment outcomes for individuals referred prior to age 24, as compared to previous year

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

- Strategy: partner with Local Mental Health Authorities and state Mental Health agency
- o Measure: of employment outcomes, as compared to previous year
- o Measure: earnings of individuals in competitive employment, as compared to previous year

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

- Strategy: Review recommendations from the Autism Task Force
- o Measure: Appropriate recommendations are implemented

- Strategy: Utilize the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Committee
- o Measure: of consumers and families participating in the Committee

**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
- 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.
- o Measure: of people using consumer-use workstations

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

- Strategy: Make video phones available in all BRS offices
- o Measure: of video phones available, usage
  
- Strategy: Continue the rate differential for Community Rehabilitation Providers who make their services accessible to individuals whose primary language is ASL
- o Measure: utilization of the rate differential

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.
- o Measure: ability to produce all forms in Spanish.
  
- Strategy: Continue the rate differential for Community Rehabilitation Providers who make their services accessible to individuals whose primary language is Spanish
- o Measure: utilization of the rate differential
  
- Strategy: Make the BRS website information available in Spanish
- o Measure: of hits to the Spanish forms within the website

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.
- o Measure: of counselors identified as transportation experts

Objective 3.5: To decrease the wait time between 00 and 02.

- Strategy: re-introduce status 00 to develop baseline measure
- o Measure: of days between 00 and 02

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

*Priority areas:*

- Businesses
- Community Rehabilitation Providers
- State agencies

Objective 4.1: Create partnerships with Businesses.

- Strategy: Increase the use of On-the-Job Trainings
- o Measure: of OJTs negotiated
- Strategy: Implement Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs
- o Measure: of awards
- o Measure: of placements

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
- o Measure: of CRPs able to serve consumers whose primary language is American Sign Language (ASL) or Spanish

Objective 4.3: Partner with state agencies.

- Strategy: Work with Connect-Ability to implement employment-focused Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) with four state agencies.
- o Measure: MOA deliverables

This screen was last updated on Aug 23 2011 8:17AM by Evelyn Knight

## 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 following section describes the goals for FFY2010, including an evaluation of the Bureau's progress in each of the goal areas.

**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
- case management in an electronic system

#### **a. Customer Service and Provision of Information**

**Returning Phone Calls:** Overall, staff continued efforts to provide good customer service by returning phone calls within 48 hours. Extra effort is given when there are staff vacancies or staff are out for an extended period to retrieve and return messages.

The **Connect-to-Work Center (e-mail:**

**[<mailto:connecttowork.dss@ct.gov>])** provides a single access point for information about the impact of wages on federal and state benefits. Community Work Incentive Coordinators provided comprehensive benefits analysis summaries to a total of 686 people (548 were new; 138 received follow up services). These summaries provide information on how to maximize income by working and using federal, state and community resources appropriately to encourage work and increased self-sufficiency. In addition, 51 consumers received Information and Referral Services and 406 people from various agencies, programs and the general public received technical assistance services. The project hosted 62 workshops during the federal fiscal year.

The Connect-to-Work Center, selected to participate in a national **Individual Development Account (IDA) Pilot Project**, has been designated as an **“Innovation**

**Champion**” for 2010 by Corporation for Enterprise Development, a national organization. IDA accounts assist low- and moderate- income people save and receive significant matching funds that will help them increase their assets and financial stability. Work was ongoing to secure funding for these accounts throughout 2010 with the assistance of the Lewin Group. Co-opportunity, the community agency partnering with us, sought funding opportunities. They also had three traditional IDA slots slated to be available in 2011. The IDAs are scheduled to start enrollment in CT in July of 2011. Participants in IDAs must be employed, or for alternative IDAs, must plan on becoming employed, **and** be on a Social Security benefit due to disability for these slots. Funding for alternative slots has been awarded by the State of Connecticut Department of Labor.

These IDA accounts will appeal to BRS consumers because they will allow for the purchase of a vehicle needed for work. Consumers enrolling in IDAs with Co-opportunity will receive Financial Literacy Training and Budget Mentoring. This program, targeted to people who are eligible for Social Security benefits due to disabilities, will be self-sustaining based on its tie-in with Social Security’s Ticket to Work program and may be replicated around the country. The Connect to Work Center Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Project (WIPA) staff collaborated with BRS and Connect-Ability staff, the Co-opportunity, and the Social Security Administration. The Lewin Group collaborated as technical assistance contractor to the pilot under funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families. The Connect to Work Project director has presented on this pilot at national conferences in Washington DC during FFY 2010 as well as on national webinars.

**Benefit Offset for SSDI Beneficiaries:** Connecticut is very proud to be one of four states testing a model where an individual’s SSDI benefit is reduced on a sliding scale when there are earnings, rather than the current all-or-nothing impact on earnings. This Connect to Work pilot addresses several of our goals including increasing self-support, consumer satisfaction, and quality of services for consumers.

A total of 265 people enrolled in the Benefit Offset project. Of the 117 that were in the Test Group, 43 used the offset. CT had the highest percentage of consumers who used the offset of the four states. Those in the test group can earn above the amount traditionally allowed by Social Security and maintain their SSDI benefits on a gradually decreasing “\$2 for \$1” basis instead of losing their benefits entirely. We continue to support people remaining in the test group. Information learned from this Four-State Pilot was used to inform the Social Security Benefit Offset National Demonstration Pilot, which started in 2011. This pilot could lead to changes in Social Security work incentives for people on Social Security Disability Insurance benefits. If this offset becomes adopted based on successful national pilot outcomes, more people on SSDI benefits will work and they will be very likely to work at higher levels of earnings because their benefits will be reduced gradually instead of ending if they earn above the Social Security Substantial Gainful Activity Level.

**VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Site Collaboration:** Connect to Work Project has been the key collaborator with the IRS and Co-opportunity to engage the disability community in using the VITA sites for free tax preparation. We have assisted them in getting out information on Earned Income Tax Credit and sites where consumers can get free tax preparation by trained volunteer staff. Co-opportunity has been recognized as a leader in outreaching to individuals with disabilities and was chosen as a site by the IRS to host a speaker from the National Disability Institute as part of the IRS National Real Economic Impact Tour. This event took place in May 2011.

**Connect-Ability:** Connect-Ability's comprehensive marketing and communication campaign of television and print ads has continued. Print ads appeared in business periodicals to reach employers statewide. Radio spots and website banners also were used to help promote the Connect-Ability tag line, "See the ability. See how we can work together." See additional Connect-Ability updates in Goal 4.

**Web Sites:** The bureau continues to increase web access to information on services that assist individuals with disabilities so they may make informed choices about where to receive the assistance they need. Our websites on BRS programs (the BRS site; the Connect-Ability marketing campaign and site; the Connecticut Tech Act Project site; and the sites for youth with disabilities) continue to serve our consumers well. We are maximizing our effort to provide information to consumers, employers and other stakeholders electronically. We also maintain person-to-person contact as staff still answers phones.

**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. Core Tech Act services include:

- statewide AT demonstrations;
- AT device loans;
- training and technical assistance for counselors and consumers regarding the use of AT in employment settings; and
- the Assistive Technology Loan Program which provides low-interest financial loans for individuals with disabilities to buy AT devices and services.

Through [<http://www.getatstuff.com/>], an online classifieds website, new and used AT devices can be recycled. Visit [<http://www.cttechact.com/>] for more details on programs and services offered by the Connecticut Tech Act Project or find and follow us on Facebook.

During this year, the Connecticut Tech Act Project added a new AT Device Loan Program funded by the bureau. BRS consumers may now borrow from a new inventory of devices while they engage in working evaluations, on-the-job training or work. 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, 12 AT devices were loaned to BRS consumers.

CTTAP training highlights for FY2010 include the following:

- Approximately 1,100 individuals participated in trainings and public awareness events;
- Public awareness activities that include printed materials, such as newsletters, brochures, and postcards reached approximately 11,370 individuals;
- The CTTAP Web site had 13,000 unique visitors and the CTTAP's page on Facebook has over 94 followers;
- At least 870 pieces of AT devices have been recycled;
- The CTTAP received approximately 500 unique inquires for Information and Referral;
- The CTTAP Program Director continues to be a part of the BRS Case Conferencing Team to provide guidance around AT needs for VR consumers.

The Assistive Technology Loan Program (ATLP) allows individuals with disabilities or their family members to obtain a low-interest financial loan to purchase needed or wanted Assistive Technology devices and services such as the vehicle needed for modification by BRS or other devices not required for employment. Over the past year, the ATLP loaned out approximately \$288,453 in funds.

**State Rehabilitation Council Survey (SRC):** The SRC collaborated with the bureau and the University of Connecticut Health Center to survey consumers in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) 2010. A four-page survey was mailed to consumers to assess the following:

1. overall satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services;
2. current employments satisfaction
3. barriers to employment; and
4. satisfaction with services from BRS.

Overall, the majority of current and former consumers expressed satisfaction with consumer involvement in setting goals and selecting services, counselor understanding and responsiveness, and office logistics. Consumers desired an improvement to the

length of time it took to get services, the services themselves, and overall experience with BRS. The bureau incorporated results of the CSNA into goals for the next few years.

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

**Individuals using Public Assistance:** BRS collaborated with the DSS unit responsible for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program to hire four state-funded **TANF/VR Counselors**. These counselors screen TANF consumers subject to sanctions for not complying with their employment plans. These screenings occurs at the conciliation interview. As part of that process, consumers are offered the opportunity to be screened in one or more of these three areas: Mental Health, Substance Abuse and/or Learning Disabilities.

#### **b. Ongoing Skill Development**

The In-Service Training Proposal (ISTP) responded to the Bureau's staff development and training requirements as identified through a comprehensive needs assessment. The in-service grant included two major goals.

##### Goal 1: BRS Staff Skill Development

Training is provided at each staff level. A broad array of topics is offered pertaining to VR, including Foundations of CT VR (formerly New Counselor Training), specific consumer populations, independent living, transition, and community rehabilitation services. Various training methods are used to assure that training activities are diverse enough to address individual learning styles.

We met the ISTP objective to restructure current training activities to provide a cyclical, more consistent curriculum for new counselors as well as to ensure continued skill development for veteran staff. Trainings emphasize the philosophy of consumer choice and direct decision making in the VR process.

##### Goal 2: Recruitment, Retention, Succession Planning, and Leadership Development

The Bureau continues to meet Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) standards in its hiring and retention practices. The Bureau's CSPD requirements mirror the requirements for national Certified Rehabilitation Counselor certification. We expect to sponsor two counselors for the entire Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. We have 15 counselors with related Master's degrees who do not meet all of the Connecticut CSPD requirements. They are each taking graduate courses to meet our

CSPD requirements and are projected to meet the CSPD within the timeframes specified in our State Plan. (*see Attachment 4.10*)

All staff have the opportunity to develop an Individual Staff Development Plan (ISDP) to ensure staff have the skills they need for current positions as well as potential future positions.

### **c. Case Management System**

System 7, a Web-based data management system replaced the bureau's Integrated Client Information System (ICIS), in October 2009. A lengthy development and preparation period followed by an extremely difficult implementation period impacted, to some degree, four of the five goals listed in this section. Technical issues with cases at nearly every stage of the vocational rehabilitation process delayed case movement throughout the new system. In addition, data conversion challenges impeded the ability to export accurate statistical measures and outcomes from this innovative system. Adapting System 7 to our business needs continues to be a work in progress.

Formal training delivered in partnership with Libera on site in March 2010 and since, via webex, has facilitated an improvement in overall staff use of the system. Field staff have also received informal training from in-house instructors. Training continues as needed with system updates and on-going helpdesk support. BRS and Libera jointly manage the helpdesk utilization and development requests to assure adequate tracking of system issues, system enhancements, and training needs.

Functions of System 7 and the understanding of the system by BRS staff administrators have improved. BRS continues to identify adjustments necessary to assure accurate adaptation to BRS business processes and policies while facilitating more efficient service delivery. However, system conversion challenges in the area of data analysis have significantly delayed the availability of traditional management reports that track statistical productivity and qualitative outcome measures. Although reporting capability has improved, it is still not optimum. On-going updates to the system, requested system enhancements and functional modifications specific to CT business practice, and timelines for implementation of resolutions continue to drain overall productivity.

An additional staff person has been hired to assist with the evaluation of staff proficiency in use of the system. Further enhancements, including the adaptation of reporting capability to fit agency business needs, and more efficient management of vocational rehabilitation data are expected.

**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
- individuals with autism spectrum disorders

### **a. Serving Individuals from Minority Backgrounds**

Our **multilingual staff** is important to serving minority consumers effectively. Current languages spoken by our staff include American Sign Language, French, French Italian, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. We hire interpreters to meet the communication needs of consumers that our staff cannot meet.

The Bureau had been successful in previous efforts to **embed counselors in urban high schools** to provide minority students with easy access to vocational rehabilitation services (VR). However, due to space issues within the high schools, only one counselor currently remains embedded at a high school. The other counselors continue to work closely with students based out of the BRS offices.

**Latino counselors** continue to collaborate with community and faith-based organizations to maintain open dialogue about VR services the bureau provides and to receive referrals from potential consumers.

### **b. Young Adults with Disabilities**

**Web-Based Navigational Tool for Young Adults:** To date, this site generated 33,358 hits from young adults, families, and educators seeking information on how to navigate the social service system. This collaboration with the National Governors Association (NGA), the bureau (along with other Connecticut state agencies and the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation) began in 2008. It is the first level of Process Mapping for transition-aged youth. The second level of Process Mapping is the Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) Searchable Database that identifies services to students and families from CRPs. Both databases will be moved to the same page on the Connect-Ability website in the near future.

**Transition resources and a 74-piece Transition Toolkit** available on the BRS Web site at <http://www.ct.gov/brs> (School to Work) continue to help staff, consumers and their families, and stakeholders with transition planning. Portions of this toolkit are also

available on the Connect-Ability website. Other states have also used this toolkit with their transition programs.

The list of **Liaison Counselors** to each of the 143 school districts in CT is also available in the School to Work section of the BRS website.

BRS has initiated a collaborative partnership between the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), the Regional Educational Service Centers (RESC), the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC), and the State Education Resource Center (SERC).

SERC and each RESC hired one Transition Resource Counselor to identify supports and services available through BRS and other adult service agencies the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB), and the Department of Public Health (DPH). These Transition Resource Counselors will collaborate with all of the initiative partners to develop strategies and resources for this project February 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012.

The Transition Resource Counselors will:

- work with families and local education authorities (LEAs) in their catchment areas to better prepare students to access competitive employment opportunities;
- provide information to LEAs and families about BRS and other adult service agencies that serve youth with disabilities;
- provide information to LEA staff regarding adult service agencies and community resources;
- facilitate the BRS referral process for appropriate students with LEAs and BRS Transition Counselors;
- participate in all Regional Transition Expos, family nights, and BRS information sessions; and
- collaborate with CPAC regarding adult service agencies and community resources for families and students.

The goals of this project are to:

- develop effective working partnerships between BRS and the local education agencies (LEAs);
- coordinate effective and efficient services for students and families regarding employment;
- increase the capacity of RESCs/SERC to work collaboratively with BRS and other state and local adult service agencies; and

- develop sustainability plans for the RESCs/SERC to continue the systems changes initiated during the grant period.

**Case Conference Model for Students with Significant Physical Disabilities:** The case conference model increases services to transition students in collaboration with Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) and its disability office. All counselors with students enrolled at the university attend this meeting to discuss services, employment, and individual needs.

Additionally we have partnered with SCSU to develop an internship preparation and linkage program so that all BRS students attending SCSU will have an internship and/or work experience at least one year prior to graduation.

The Bureau is in its fourth year of working with SCSU to develop evening workshops for parents and students to emphasize the skills needed for employment beyond those developed in the classroom. This series has been titled “A Degree Is Not Enough” and workshops have included topics such as dressing for success, financial literacy, travel/transportation, preparing for career fairs, and assistive technology. Two more workshops will be developed in the series to provide one per semester while a student is in school. A manual of the eight workshop modules is being developed so the workshops can be replicated with other colleges.

#### [\[aname="OLE\\_LINK2"\]>\[/a\]\[aname="OLE\\_LINK1"\]>c. Consumers with Psychiatric Disabilities](#)

[/a]BRS and the **Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)** continue to co-fund an Employment Consultant who targets supported employment training and initiatives across both systems. This collaboration is in its 10th year to improve employment outcomes for individuals with psychiatric and/or addiction disorders.

A BRS counselor, who is stationed at a Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA), is collaborating with DMHAS staff to conduct joint employment planning to better serve shared consumers with psychiatric disabilities. As part of this project, the University of Connecticut is conducting research to collect data and track the 68 DMHAS consumers who participated in this project to determine best practices and solicit consumer feedback. Preliminary research findings highlight the importance of close collaboration between the two systems to insure joint employment planning and monitoring, on-going interagency communication, and appropriate services leveraged from both systems, as needed. University researchers completed the report in March 2011. Overall this intervention group, when compared to other BRS consumers with severe mental illness, had higher rates of employment and higher wages 12-18 months after application for services. The report also documented a number of interesting outcomes: 27% of shared

consumers were already employed and seeking career advancement; nearly 90% of participants were either very or somewhat satisfied with the rehabilitation services they received from the BRS Counselors, and the experience of both the consumers and counselors improved where interagency communication and collaboration was strong.

A significant number of these consumers are transition age; they will remain in the system several years before they complete their plans for employment. During the program year, DMHAS was awarded Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) funding to build the vocational services infrastructure

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 Programs are part of the menu of programs and services the Ongoing Supports Committee established in 2007. Business partners on this committee are building this menu by actively seeking out blended services options for providing supported employment services to consumers.

The Ticket to Work Partnership Plus Model (released in the spring of 2008) was a featured program, along with other established employment services programs such as the Employment Opportunities Program administered by BRS. Other vocational services, supported employment programs, One-Stop employment programs and private Employment Networks under the Ticket program are involved in this statewide endeavor to coordinate ongoing employment services to mutually serve consumers.

### **Supported Employment Strategies**

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

- Continue individually developed supported employment plans with consumers; and
- Continue to reimburse Community Rehabilitation Providers at an hourly rate for their support for consumers using supported employment services.

Establish a menu of programs that can provide ongoing supports and services to consumers including the Ticket Program, and the Employment Opportunities Program;

- Develop the Partnership Plus/ Business Model to provide blended-funding employment supports to consumers;
- Develop Best Practices/ Evidenced Based Practices;
- Continue to seek additional avenues for long-term support for consumers that require supported employment services;

3. Provide an Assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY 2010.

#### Standards and Indicators

The bureau met the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) standards and indicators in FFY 2010 in the following manner:

Indicator 1.1 - Change in employment outcome from previous year: ( $\geq 1,420$ ) 922

The bureau closed a total 922 cases with successful outcomes in FY 2010. This is 488 less cases with successful rehabilitation outcomes than the prior year. Therefore, we did not pass this Indicator.

Indicator 1.2 – Of cases closed after services, percent of employment outcomes: ( $\geq 58\%$ ) 51.5%

The bureau had a rehabilitation rate of 51.5%. Therefore, we did not pass this Indicator.

Indicator 1.3 – Of consumers who achieved employment, percent w/competitive employment: ( $\geq 72.6\%$ ) 99.6%

The bureau had a competitive outcome rate of 99.6%. Therefore, we passed this Indicator.

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

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

Indicator 1.5 – Earnings ratio – hourly wage competitive employment to hourly wage of all employed in state ( $\geq .52$ ) .61

The bureau had an average earnings ratio of .61 when compared to the state average earnings. Therefore, we passed this Indicator.

Indicator 1.6 – Self-support at closure VS self-support at application ( $\geq 53$ ) 36.8%

The bureau failed this Indicator as 36.8% of our successful outcomes went from not self-supporting to self-supporting at closure.

Indicator 2.1 – Ratio of minority population to nonminority population ( $\geq .80$ ) .81

The bureau had a minority service rate that was .81 of the service rate for consumers from non-minority backgrounds. Therefore, we passed this Indicator.

Although the Bureau passed all three primary Indicators on level 1, we only passed three of six indicators which does not achieve established minimum standards. The Bureau is cognizant of this issue and has been working diligently to improve its performance for FFY 2011.

Success in Improving Services to Minority Consumers -  
RSA Standard and Indicator 2.1

Minority Consumers

The bureau has worked diligently to meet the RSA National Standard and Indicator 2.1 and as a result, this goal was achieved the past two years - FFY 2009 and FFY 2010. We ended FFY 2010 with a Minority Ratio of .81, which exceeds the national standard of .80.

Our minority consumers are served under IPE's (20%) at a close percentage of the minority population of our state (25%). We are also pleased that our hiring practices have resulted in diversity of our staff similar to or greater than the diversity of Connecticut. We currently have 34% of our staff from diverse backgrounds compared to a 25% non-white population of Connecticut.

We continue to closely monitor agency performance related to this measure. On April 20, 2011, our year-to-date (YTD) for this indicator was .79. We are committed to meeting this goal for a third year in a row with continued reinforcement of the "best practices" listed below:

Urban Schools: Although we currently only have one counselor embedded in an urban high school due to space constrictions at the schools, counselors who were previously embedded continue to work closely with the schools where they had been assigned .

Latino Initiatives: Our Latino counselors continue to work with community and faith-based organizations including Spanish American Merchants Associations (SAMA), local church projects, and Community Action Groups. Latino counselors continue to collect national research to find best practices within vocational rehabilitation for serving diverse consumers.

Regional Training: Regional district directors continue to provide training at their monthly staff meetings on serving minority consumers.

Native American Collaboration: Our Norwich/New London Community Work Incentive Coordinator (CWIC) worked with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation VR 121 Project on benefits counseling for tribal members.

Increased Access to Benefits Counseling: Increase access for benefits counseling to minority consumers by hiring CWIC staff that speaks Spanish. Currently 28% of our CWICs can serve our Latino population in either Spanish or English.

4. Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in FY 2010.

### **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) \$ 12,561

**Total funding for Innovation and Expansion \$192,561**

### **Description of Innovation and Expansion Projects**

The next section of this report provides additional information on the innovation and expansion projects funded through designated funds.

State Independent Living Council (SILC)

During 2010, 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 2010:

- sponsored (on the Platinum level) the 2010 Disability Convention and Expo, enabling more than 700 state residents the opportunity to gather information and resources focused on independent living issues and employment;
- sponsored the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) at UCONN, during which forty high school students with disabilities from throughout CT attended a four-day training curriculum which focused on enhancing community leadership skills; and
- supported Powerfest enabling 152 high school and college aged youth with disabilities to plan and participate in a day long event that included motivational speakers, musicians, celebrities, workshops and exhibitors touching on various aspects of independent living.

#### State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

BRS uses the innovation and expansion authority, as specified by the Rehabilitation Act, to support the functions of the State Rehabilitation Council. In 2010, the SRC collaborated with BRS on the public meetings and the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and attended a variety of fairs to share information about BRS and the SRC. The SRC Chair also 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 third year. See Attachment 4.2(c) for more information on the SRC.

This screen was last updated on Aug 23 2011 8:17AM by Evelyn Knight

## **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) 2009. In previous years, attention has been specific to the areas of community rehabilitation provider (CRP) and vocational rehabilitation counseling staff training; establishing quality standards and minimum requirements of direct service staff; and reviewing the qualifications of the CRP vocational services Program Director. Consumer program participation increased as a result of these initiatives.

### **Coordination and Collaboration**

Further, BRS is engaged in facilitating systemic changes in how supported employment services are delivered in the community. The Bureau works with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and other partners to transition consumers from the Title VI, Part B funding to an appropriate ongoing employment support program. These efforts have led to internal and external improvements in our state system and have built a foundation for a strong supported employment service program in this state.

In FFY 2009, the Bureau continued to explore a variety of funding options to ensure extended services to persons in the program beyond Title VI, part B. In FFY 2010, the Bureau enhanced the supported employment program by initiating Social Security's Ticket to Work Partnership Plus Program as an additional resource for consumers to engage in long-term employment supports. The Partnership Plus Program makes available to consumers a variety of long-term employment supports and in addition is helping to increase funding to providers of services. These initiatives will reach more individuals with disabilities not typically engaged in long-term employment supports and focuses on increasing employment and self sufficiency.

### **Current Goals**

This foundation has guided the Bureau as it lays the framework for coordination of an ongoing employment services system with the federal supported employment services program. As documented in Attachment 4.11(e)(2), the Bureau has actively sought to increase the number of consumers who are able to access a menu of ongoing employment

services. The Bureau and its supported employment providers around the state are developing cooperative agreements, partnerships and models of employment services and supports for the diverse consumer population in Connecticut. The broad range of services and supports that are becoming available in different venues gives the state partners flexibility in administering programs and utilization of blended funding sources.

The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 Supported Employment definition emphasizes “competitive work in an integrated employment setting for persons with the most severe disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability and who, because of the severity of the disability, need intensive support services or extended services in order to perform such work, inclusive of transitional employment for persons with the most severe disabilities due to mental illness.”

It is within this context that supported employment services are determined on an individual basis. The collaborations between service providers and state stakeholders have allowed for the continuation of ongoing support services that will help to retain and increase employment options for individuals with disabilities.

### **Transition to Extended Services**

As with all Bureau services, supported employment services will be designed and provided based on the individual needs of the consumer. The Bureau will work with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and our other partners to transition consumers from Title VI, Part B funding to the identified provider of the ongoing, long-term support funding as soon as the funding is available and transition is appropriate. Use of Title VI, Part B funds will vary, based on the needs of the individual consumer, but will generally not exceed 18 months in length.