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

**Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year
2011 (submitted FY 2010)**

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Footnotes

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

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

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

[4] The following attachments require annual updating and must be submitted each year.

[5] Required Annually for All Agencies on an Order of Selection

**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
2011 (submitted FY 2010)**

Section 1: State Certifications

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

The Department of Social Services

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

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

The Department of Social Services

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

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

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

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

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

1.7 The (enter title of state officer below) Yes

State Treasurer

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

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

Commissioner Department of Social Services

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

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

State Plan Certified By

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

Signed?

Name of Signatory	Michael P. Starkowski
Title of Signatory	Commissioner Department of Social Services
Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy)	06/29/2010

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 2011

Yes

Comments:

Signed?

Name of Signatory	Michael P. Starkowski
Title of Signatory	Commissioner Department of Social Services
Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy)	06/29/2010

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

Section 1 Footnotes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 2: Public Comment on State Plan Policies and Procedures

2.1 Public participation requirements. (Section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.10(d),

.20(a), (b), (d); and 363.11(g)(9)

(a) Conduct of public meetings.

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

(b) Notice requirements.

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

(c) Special consultation requirements.

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

Section 3: Submission of the State Plan and its Supplement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

34 CFR 361.34 and 363.10)

(a) The state has an acceptable plan for carrying out Part B, of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act that provides for the use of funds under that part to supplement funds made available under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the cost of services leading to supported employment.

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

Section 4: Administration of the State Plan

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

(a) Designated state agency.

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

The designated state agency is:

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

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

(b) Designated state unit.

1. If the designated state agency is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other

rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(B) of this section, the state agency includes a vocational rehabilitation bureau, division or unit that:

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

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

The State Plan must contain one of the following assurances.

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

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

or

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

1. jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council develops, agrees to and reviews annually state goals and priorities and jointly submits to the commissioner annual reports of progress in accordance with the provisions of Section 101(a)(15) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.29 and subsection 4.11 of this State Plan;
2. regularly consults with the State Rehabilitation Council regarding the development, implementation and revision of state policies and procedures of general applicability pertaining to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services;
3. includes in the State Plan and in any revision to the State Plan a summary of input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including recommendations from the annual report of the council described in Section 105(c)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(5), the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction described in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4), and other reports prepared by the council and the response of the designated state unit to the input and recommendations, including explanations for rejecting any input or recommendation; and
4. transmits to the council:
 - A. all plans, reports and other information required under 34 CFR 361 to be submitted to the commissioner;
 - B. all policies and information on all practices and procedures of general applicability provided to or used by rehabilitation personnel in carrying out this State Plan and its supplement; and
 - C. copies of due process hearing decisions issued under 34 CFR 361.57, which are transmitted in such a manner as to ensure that the identity of the participants in the hearings is kept confidential.

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

4.3 Consultations regarding the administration of the State Plan. (Section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation

Act; 34 CFR 361.21)

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

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

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

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

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

The State Plan provides for the administration of the plan by a local agency. No

If "Yes", the designated state agency:

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

accordance with the State Plan.

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

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

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

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

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

This agency is not requesting a waiver of statewideness.

- (a) Services provided under the State Plan are available in all political subdivisions of the state.*
- (b) The state unit may provide services in one or more political subdivisions of the state that increase services or expand the scope of services that are available statewide under this State Plan if the:*
 1. nonfederal share of the cost of these services is met from funds provided by a local public agency, including funds contributed to a local public agency by a private agency, organization or individual;
 2. services are likely to promote the vocational rehabilitation of substantially larger numbers of individuals with disabilities or of individuals with disabilities with particular types of impairments; and

3. state, for purposes other than the establishment of a community rehabilitation program or the construction of a particular facility for community rehabilitation program purposes, requests in Attachment 4.7(b)(3) a waiver of the statewideness requirement in accordance with the following requirements:

- A. identification of the types of services to be provided;
- B. written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the state unit the nonfederal share of funds;
- C. written assurance that state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect; and
- D. written assurance that all other State Plan requirements, including a state's order of selection, will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 1. cooperation with and use of the services and facilities of the federal, state, and local agencies and programs, including programs carried out by the undersecretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of

- Agriculture and state use contracting programs, to the extent that those agencies and programs are not carrying out activities through the statewide work force investment system;
2. coordination, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 4.8(c) of this section, with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services;
 3. establishment of cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.10(b) of the State Plan; and,
 4. efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and entities with respect to the provision of supported employment and extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with the requirements of subsection 6.5 of the supplement to this State Plan.

(c) Coordination with education officials.

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

with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

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

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

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

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

1. There is in the state a recipient(s) of a grant under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing on or near federal and state reservations.
2. If "Yes", the designated state agency has entered into a formal cooperative agreement that meets the following requirements with each grant recipient in the state that receives funds under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act:
 - A. strategies for interagency referral and information sharing that will assist in eligibility determinations and the development of individualized plans for employment;
 - B. procedures for ensuring that American Indians who are individuals with disabilities and are living near a reservation or tribal service area are provided vocational rehabilitation services; and
 - C. provisions for sharing resources in cooperative studies and assessments, joint training activities, and other collaborative activities designed to improve the provision of services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities.

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

(a) In general.

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

(b) Employment of individuals with disabilities.

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

(c) Facilities.

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

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

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

(a) Data system on personnel and personnel development.

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

1. Qualified personnel needs.

A. The number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation

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

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

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

(c) Personnel standards.

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

1. standards that are consistent with any national- or state-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational

rehabilitation services.

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

(d) Staff development.

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

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

(e) Personnel to address individual communication needs.

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

appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.

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

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

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

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

(a) Comprehensive statewide assessment.

1. Attachment 4.11(a) documents the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, jointly conducted every three years by the designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council (if the state has such a council). The assessment describes:
 - A. the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:
 - i. individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
 - ii. individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under this State Plan; and
 - iii. individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide work force investment system.
 - B. The need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.
2. For any year in which the state updates the assessments, the designated state unit submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding updates to the assessments.

(b) Annual estimates.

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

1. number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services under the plan;
2. number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds provided under Part B of Title I of the

Rehabilitation Act and under Part B of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection in accordance with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of this State Plan, estimates of the number of individuals to be served under each priority category within the order; and

3. costs of the services described in subparagraph (b)(1), including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection, the service costs for each priority category within the order.

(c) Goals and priorities.

1. Attachment 4.11(c)(1) identifies the goals and priorities of the state that are jointly developed or revised, as applicable, with and agreed to by the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council, in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.
2. The designated state agency submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding any revisions in the goals and priorities for any year the state revises the goals and priorities.
3. Order of selection.

If the state agency implements an order of selection, consistent with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of the State Plan, Attachment 4.11(c)(3):

- A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
 - B. provides a justification for the order; and
 - C. identifies the service and outcome goals, and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
4. Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds.
Attachment 4.11(c)(4) specifies, consistent with subsection 6.4 of the State Plan supplement, the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

(d) Strategies.

1. Attachment 4.11(d) describes the strategies, including:
 - A. the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities, including how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to those individuals

at each stage of the rehabilitation process and how those services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis;

- B. outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities in accordance with subsection 6.6 of the State Plan supplement, and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
- C. as applicable, the plan of the state for establishing, developing or improving community rehabilitation programs;
- D. strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
- E. strategies for assisting other components of the statewide work force investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

2. Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the designated state agency uses these strategies to:

- A. address the needs identified in the assessment conducted under paragraph 4.11(a) and achieve the goals and priorities identified in the State Plan attachments under paragraph 4.11(c);
- B. support the innovation and expansion activities identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) of the plan; and
- C. overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Supported Employment Services Program.

(e) Evaluation and reports of progress.

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

2. Attachment 4.11(e)(2):

- A. provides an evaluation of the extent to which the goals identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3) were achieved;
- B. identifies the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals and priorities;
- C. describes the factors that impeded their achievement, to the extent they were not achieved;
- D. assesses the performance of the state on the standards and indicators established pursuant to Section 106

of the Rehabilitation Act; and

E. provides a report consistent with paragraph 4.12(c) of the plan on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were utilized in the preceding year.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and protects the confidentiality of the identity of each individual.

Section 5: Administration of the Provision of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

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

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

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

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

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

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

(b) If No:

1. Individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with criteria established by the state, are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services before other individuals with disabilities.
2. Attachment 4.11(c)(3):
 - A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
 - B. provides a justification for the order of selection; and
 - C. identifies the state's service and outcome goals and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
3. Eligible individuals who do not meet the order of selection criteria have access to the services provided through the designated state unit's information and referral system established under Section 101(a)(20) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.37, and subsection 5.1 of this State Plan.

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

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

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

1. assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;
2. counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act;
3. referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide work force investment system, through agreements developed under Section 101(a)(11) of the

Rehabilitation Act, if such services are not available under this State Plan;

4. job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;
5. rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids and devices; and
6. post-employment services consisting of the services listed under subparagraphs (1) through (5) of this paragraph.

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

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

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

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

(a) An individualized plan for employment meeting the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act

and 34 CFR 361.45 and .46 is developed and implemented in a timely manner for each individual determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, except if the state has implemented an order of selection, and is developed and implemented for each individual to whom the designated state unit is able to provide vocational rehabilitation services.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. who has achieved an employment outcome in which the individual is compensated in accordance with Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (29 U.S.C. 214(c)); or

2. whose record of services is closed while the individual is in extended employment on the basis that the individual is unable to achieve an employment outcome in an integrated setting or that the individual made an informed choice to remain in extended employment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(c) There is compliance with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.62(b) that ensure the use of the construction

authority will not reduce the efforts of the designated state agency in providing other vocational rehabilitation services other than the establishment of facilities for community rehabilitation programs.

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

(a) Contracts with for-profit organizations.

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

(b) Cooperative agreements with private nonprofit organizations.

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

Section 6: Program Administration

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

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

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

Attachment 4.11(a) describes the results of the comprehensive, statewide needs assessment conducted under Section

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Attachment 4.11(d) includes a description of the designated state agency's outreach procedures for identifying and

serving individuals with the most significant disabilities who are minorities.

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

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

Section 7: Financial Administration

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

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

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

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

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

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

services to individuals who are eligible under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

Section 8: Provision of Supported Employment Services

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(b) The individualized plan for employment:

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

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

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

**Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year
2011 (submitted FY 2010)**

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

1. BRS 2009 Annual Meeting;
2. BRS Public Meetings November 2009;
3. BRS Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA);
4. BRS State Plan;
5. BRS Transition Committee;
6. Connect-Ability Employment Summit 2009;

7. Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Fall 2009 and Spring 2010 Conference;
8. National Council of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) Conferences (2) and Teleconferences (4); and
9. SRC Meetings (six per year).

Common Themes Shared at Public Meeting and in Writing

The public meetings were held November 9, 2009 in preparation for the 2011 State Plan.

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

These meetings were held in Hartford, New Haven, and Stamford. In total, 10 SRC representatives attended the public meetings. Approximately 20 BRS personnel were also on hand to hear the comments directly from the consumers and be available to respond one-on-one to consumer issues.

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 date of the public meetings in case some one 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.

Staff from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) also attended the Hartford meeting with a desire to better understand vocational rehabilitation services and how their consumers could benefit from BRS involvement.

The major themes that have evolved from all comments include areas where BRS has been successful and areas that need improvement.

Success:

1. Counselors identified by name were praised for their diligence and creativity;
2. BRS has made a positive impact on the lives of many consumers;
3. Consumers received much useful information to help them through the process;
4. The process may require lots of work on the part of the consumer, but the outcome is worth the required effort; and
5. Public meetings provide opportunity for consumers to understand the process more. Learning about others who may have had similar obstacles provides encouragement.

Needs Improvement:

1. Job placements are needed; the process takes too long to get service or a job;
2. Counselor replacements take too long;
3. CRP involvement needs improvement – more knowledgeable about resources and options, more activity, better results;
4. Transportation to find and keep a job are needed;
5. Services are needed for consumers on the Autism Spectrum;
6. Services are needed in the Valley area;
7. Communication devices are needed for consumers who are deaf.

The SRC members in attendance made some observations regarding the public meetings as well. Those who attended Hartford were pleased with the outcomes. The suggestion in New Haven was to hold the meeting in a larger room. The following concerns were shared about the meeting in Stamford:

1. Meeting site needs to be more accessible, with ample parking and lighting;
2. Create a warm friendly environment and engage attendees as they enter;
3. Deliver presentations in smaller segments and present material in a Power Point presentation;
4. Make sure all translators facilitate the entire meeting, not just the time when comments/questions are posed by the person who speaks Spanish;
5. Protect privacy of consumers and their issues;
6. Treat attendees with respect.

Evaluations of the public meetings were also distributed to enable attendees to offer feedback on the process and to make

suggestions for improvements. Overall, the public meetings were well-received. Consumers would like to see public meetings held more often and see more people attend.

Statistics from BRS Consumer Surveys conducted October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009 show an overall satisfaction in 92% of 232 completed surveys. The purpose of the Consumer Survey is to assess consumers' viewpoints of their satisfaction with the vocational rehabilitation (VR) service process and the effectiveness of VR in assisting consumers to obtain and maintain employment.

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

SRC Recommendations

The SRC notes that BRS has developed many new and innovative programs and services that benefit the consumers of the agency. Changes in the agency data management system as well as a large number of veteran employees taking a retirement incentive created a number of challenges for BRS, which impacted the service delivery. BRS' commitment to continued program innovations and service is commendable.

Based on the BRS public forums and the SRC participation in the CSNA process the following recommendations are offered:

Recommendation 1 –

The consumer survey issued by the University of Connecticut suggests that BRS and the SRC reconsider how we conduct consumer satisfaction surveys.

The SRC recommends that BRS work with the SRC to identify ways to survey consumers at various stages in the rehabilitation process and after case closure.

BRS Response 1: BRS looks forward to working closely with the SRC on on-going survey formats and working with regional offices to find a comprehensive way to survey consumers at various stages of the rehabilitation process.

Recommendation 2 –

The SRC recommends that BRS consider establishing attainable target satisfaction levels to be measured in survey results for various aspects of its service delivery process.

BRS Response 2: BRS looks forward to working closely with the SRC on establishing attainable target satisfaction levels.

Recommendation 3 –

During the University of Connecticut survey, several respondents indicated that they would like to talk to someone for more information regarding their services and to discuss their individual cases.

The SRC recommends that BRS consider a mechanism for addressing consumer concerns that arise as part of the survey process. A Help Desk format could be considered.

BRS Response 3: It is important to ensure that consumers understand the BRS process and services. BRS did have a process in place to address consumer concerns. The process was that our central office Public Relations consultant served as the first point of contact to help consumers understand BRS's role and start the process of identifying next steps.

Recommendation 4 –

In key informant interviews, counselor surveys, and the public forum, it was noted that the relationship between the CRPs and BRS needs improvement in communication about services and goals, cross training, resources, and other key issues.

The SRC recommends that BRS develop opportunities to work collaboratively with the CRPs to address the issues mentioned above.

BRS Response 4: This issue will be raised with the CRP committee for further discussion.

Recommendation 5:

In both the consumer survey and the public forum, there were issues related to communication access to services for consumers who are deaf and consumers whose primary language is not English (Spanish, Asian).

The SRC recommends that BRS consider developing specialized services among CRPs to address the disability-related language needs of those who are Deaf, as well as expand culturally competent language services for those whom English is not their first language.

BRS Response 5: BRS clearly understands that CRP's have minimal interpreters/translators for our specialized individuals with language barriers. This has been an on-going issue for many years based on lack of staffing of approved sign-language interpreters, or Latino staff. BRS is in the process of developing rate differentials for CRPs who provide services in languages that meets the needs of the populations determined to be unserved or underserved.

Recommendation 6 –

Technology is available for access via video-phone for consumers who are deaf. The SRC has previously presented this recommendation and BRS has made some progress in establishing video phone access in selected BRS offices. The

SRC again recommends that BRS obtain this enhanced form of communication in all geographical areas where specialized staff work with Deaf consumers.

BRS Response 6: BRS is working with our parent agency to ensure the use of video phones in each of our regional offices.

Recommendation 7 –

With so many recent staff changes at BRS and in school districts, it may be important for BRS to provide information on transition planning to school districts and students/families to facilitate clear communication, that will help ensure seamless services (as deemed appropriate) for students.

BRS high school liaison position might be appropriate to provide high school special education staff training from BRS during the 2010-11 school year. Emphasis should be placed on BRS, its services and the importance of connecting students with BRS (as appropriate) to help improve transition planning/services for students 16 and older

BRS Response 7: BRS is working in collaboration with the State Department of Education, the State Education Resource Center (SERC), and the Regional Education Service Centers (RESC) to provide better access and understanding of BRS and school district responsibilities. SERC will hire a project coordinator and each of the RESCs will hire a transition position to address the very needs articulated above.

This screen was last updated on Jun 29 2010 2:29PM by Evelyn Knight

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State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program

and

State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2011 (submitted FY 2010)

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

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This attachment was originally submitted to RSA as part of a prior State Plan in FY 2009 and was last updated 07/27/2009.

**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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Learning Disabilities.

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

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

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

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

At the beginning of this fiscal year, we signed an MOU between BRS, DMHAS, and the University of Connecticut's Center on Aging will provide research that will be consistent with the types of research we have collected in other parts of the program. Although we have had a resignation in one of the local mental health authorities (LMHA), we have been working with the other two regions quite actively. Our embedded counselors are working with 68 DMHAS cases, 43 of whose cases were opened during this project. Our project goal is to reach 50 cases by July 2009, when we stop collecting the new data and move to tracking the participants. Sixteen of the 43 are currently working and our counselors also are addressing the clinical staff with consultation on 15 additional cases that may be new applicants in the future.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DSS received \$64.3 million to expand the Weatherization Program. Coordination among state agencies that administer

energy, housing and human service programs has increased significantly and been an integral part of the planning for the expanded three-year program. Some of the agencies and organizations collaborating with DSS include BRS, the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), the Connecticut Community and Technical Colleges; the Community Action Agencies (CAAs); the Connecticut Housing and Finance Authority; DOL; the Governor's Office; the Institute for Sustainable Energy; Jobs Funnel Programs; the OWC; the Workforce Investment Boards; and Work Place, Inc. Detailed plans for program implementation will continue to be worked out in the next several weeks. There are model programs in Connecticut with similar job skill requirements that successfully recruit, train and place individuals in apprenticeship positions and prevailing wage jobs in their region. Additionally, mechanisms for sustainable jobs and career-ladder opportunities based on experience and training, are included in the program planning. DSS intends to distribute the ARRA funds in ways that will increase job opportunities and provide specialized training for and access to jobs during this economic downturn. The goal is that these jobs will continue or that the skills obtained through these jobs will be transferable and marketable in the "green" job markets of the future.

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

E. Walgreens Project

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

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

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

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

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

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

H. Connect-Ability Local Level Initiatives

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

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

Some of the expected outcomes include increased awareness of transition practices, increased employer knowledge about hiring individuals with disabilities, increased knowledge and availability of transportation options, travel training, advocacy, mentoring and internship opportunities. Contracts began in April 2009 and will end in December 2009.

I. Coordination with Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and Independent Living Centers (ILC).

BRS entered into a three-year contract (2007-2010) with the SILC to fund its Resource Plan in the amount of \$180,000 annually, using funding under the Title I Innovation and Expansion (I&E) provision in the law. A bureau staff member also serves in an ex-officio capacity on the SILC, and has taken an active role in serving on various committees and SILC projects. Additional, SILC staff and officers meet semiannually with the bureau director and senior management staff to

review progress in meeting the objectives of the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) and to resolve any problems or concerns.

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

J. Cooperative Agreement with Recipients of Grants for Services to American Indians

BRS has a cooperative agreement with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Program that allows for cross training of staff and case sharing.

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Screen 6 of 17

This attachment was originally submitted to RSA as part of a prior State Plan in FY 2009 and was last updated 07/27/2009.

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 2011 (submitted FY 2010)

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

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

(2) Coordination with Education Officials

A. Higher Education

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

B. High School

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

To this end, we have the following agreements:

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

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

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

services. In addition, Connecticut has initiated a number of new activities to increase referrals and improve services to this group.

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

Bridgeport Mental Health Transition Project

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

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

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

Committees

In 2006, BRS established a Transition Committee made up of the six transition counselors, representative liaison

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

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

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

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

In 2007, the Connect to Work Center within BRS, through its Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), signed a MOU with the Office of Workforce Competitiveness to begin exploring Data Interoperability possibilities in Connecticut. This need was identified originally through the efforts of the eight state agencies that worked on the National Governor's Association (NGA) Policy Academy on Improving Outcomes for Young Adults with Disabilities. Commissioners from several state agencies work collaboratively to determine the feasibility of this initiative. BRS, DMHAS and DDS are evaluating a small sampling of cases that all three agencies have provided services to consumers. In May 2009, a Project Director from the

University of Connecticut Health Center was assigned to this project.

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This attachment was originally submitted to RSA as part of a prior State Plan in FY 2009 and was last updated 06/30/2009.

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
2011 (submitted FY 2010)**

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

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

(3) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

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

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

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

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Screen 8 of 17

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

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2011 (submitted FY 2010)

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

Describe the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative

agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide the following services to individuals with the most significant disabilities:

- supported employment services; and
- extended services.

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

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

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

- Establish a menu of programs that can provide ongoing supports and services to consumers including the Ticket Program, and the Employment Opportunities Program;
- Develop Partnership Plus/ Business Model to provide blended-funding employment supports to consumers;
- Develop/ Best Practices/ Evidenced Based Practices;
- Continue to seek additional avenues for long-term support for consumers that require supported employment services;
- Continue individually developed supported employment plans with consumers; and
- Continue to reimburse Community Rehabilitation Providers at an hourly rate for their support for consumers using supported employment services.

**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
2011 (submitted FY 2010)**

Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

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

- the number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
- the number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
- projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)

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

Data System on Personnel

The Department of Social Services (DSS) maintains a computerized record system for personnel needs, resources, and training. In addition to this system, the bureau uses its newly launched 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 June 2010, 148 positions were filled. The number and type of BRS positions are identified in the personnel chart below.

The bureau currently has 74 of 89 vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor positions filled. Twenty-one serve specialty caseloads. Three of the specialty caseloads prioritize consumers with mental health diagnoses (one position is vacant), eight prioritize transition caseloads, six prioritize individuals that are Deaf and four 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 is currently serving 4,910 applicants and eligible individuals. Of the 4,910, 4,357 have been determined eligible for services and meet the bureau's Order of Selection. With 74 VR counselors, the ratio of counselors to all consumers is 1:66. The ratio of counselors to eligible consumers is 1:59. VR supervisors often see consumers when counselors are not available. The ratio of VR supervisors to consumers is 1:614. The ratio of VR supervisors to eligible

individuals is 1:545. The ratio of all staff to consumers is 1:33.

Current Need for Staff

The bureau has added six two-year durational 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. Although these ARRA-funded positions have resulted in a temporary increase in the number of VR counselor positions within BRS, we do not intend to permanently increase our staffing to this level beyond the two-year ARRA funding. 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

Aside from the two-year ARRA-funded positions, 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 current 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.

As a result of the retirements in FY2009, BRS saved on personnel expenditures as positions remained vacant during the refill process and positions were refilled at a lower cost (entry-level versus senior staff).

The bureau updates its four-year projections quarterly to determine the need to adjust staff/case service/administrative costs. The bureau currently uses System 7 to help monitor its Human Resource Plan to:

- analyze available and projected resources;

- project service needs for persons with disabilities;
- monitor changes in organizational structure and service delivery methodologies; and
- establish adequate staffing patterns.

The bureau has taken the lead in CT for coordinating services for youths with disabilities. The transition initiatives have implications for staffing and case service funds. In FFY 2006, the bureau projected a 50% increase in transition referrals by FFY 2010. Although staff losses and the subsequent staff reassignments have resulted in a reduced capacity to meet this level of increase in referrals, the number of transition-aged applicants has significantly increased over FFY 2006 levels. With a continued commitment to servicing this population, BRS expects the projected increase will be realized by or before 2012. This increase in transition cases would logically require an increase in staff. However, the bureau cannot increase its personnel budget unless it receives an increase in federal funding. The ARRA program will enable BRS to serve more consumers during the duration of this grant period, but the bureau does not anticipate any other ongoing funding that would allow an increase in staffing levels.

In addition, the bureau continues to evaluate the skills support staff will need to assist the counseling staff over the next several years. The bureau is currently reviewing 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. Because of System 7's enhanced capabilities, the bureau's use of support staff may be adjusted. BRS will continue to analyze the benefits gained from System 7 and report on its impact on staff in the next state plan.

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Administrative Fiscal Secretarial Support Staff	43	3	

2	Central Office Consultants	17	3	
3	Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC)	7	0	
4	District Directors	3	0	
5	Managers	3	1	
6	Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisors	9	1	
7	Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors	89	15	
8				
9				
10				

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

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

Personnel Development

We analyze the graduate information from the regional CORE universities to find schools that offer required courses or

graduate degrees in rehabilitation counseling. We also check with local CORE schools for the availability of distance learning opportunities for the required CSPD courses.

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

Row	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
1	Assumption College Massachusetts	104	0	0	
2	Central Connecticut State University Connecticut	78	4	1	
3	Salve Regina Rhode Island	54	1	0	
4	Springfield College Massachusetts	39	0	0	
5	Virginia Commonwealth University	143	1	0	

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

personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

Recruitment

The bureau currently sends announcements for Counselor positions to all CORE-accredited institutions of higher education that train VR Counselors in the United States. We have initiated contacts with all CORE-accredited universities so that we can continue to find well-qualified staff for the vacancies we anticipate in the future. In addition, we are in close contact with the regional institutions from which we have traditionally found Counselor applicants; we have staff that serve on advisory boards or teach at these institutions.

The bureau is pleased to report that we have successfully recruited a qualified staff representative of the population of Connecticut: the 34% diversity of our staff exceeds the 25% diversity of our state. We are also pleased to have recruited 14% of our staff from individuals that have disabilities. Our primary challenge has been finding Master's level counselors who are proficient with Spanish or American Sign Language (ASL). We will continue the following steps to ensure there is a sufficient pool of qualified counselors for future openings:

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

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

- Psychology;
- Social Work;
- Social Science; or

- A degree deemed acceptable by the bureau.

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

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

- 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
- 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 units 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.

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

- 60 months of vocational counseling experience accepted by the credentialing committee - no additional courses are required. CSPD requirements are met.
- 48 months of vocational counseling experience accepted by the credentialing committee - two of the following four additional courses are required to meet CSPD requirements.
 - o Assessment
 - o Occupational Information or Job Placement
 - o Medical or Psychosocial Aspects of Disabilities
 - o Community Resources or Delivery of Rehabilitation Services.

- 36 months of vocational counseling experience or less – four additional courses are required to meet requirements for CSPD
 - o Assessment
 - o Occupational Information or Job Placement
 - o Medical or Psychosocial Aspects of Disabilities
 - o Community Resources or Delivery of Rehabilitation Services.

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

BRS employees interested in CRC certification are encouraged to contact the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification at the following website: <http://www.crccertification.com/> for more specific information on their credentials and experience. The bureau does not guarantee that the above criteria will entitle a counselor to sit for the CRC exam. The bureau provides training at no cost, and offers Continuing Education Units (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 98 staff positions required to meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Standards; 89 counselors and 9 supervisors. Sixteen of these positions (fifteen counselors and one supervisor) 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. Twelve counselors are taking one to four 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 no 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 27 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, 13 Connecticut Licensed Professional Counselors, 4 National Board of Certified Counselors, 7 Certified Work Incentive and Assistance Programs (WIPA) Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC) and 5 Certified Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) or National Certified Interpreters. We also have one Consultant who is an Assistive Technology Professional (ATP).

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

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

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

VR supervisors and VR caseload counselors currently have the primary responsibility for making eligibility determinations;

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

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

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

Preparation/ Staff Development

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

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

- A needs survey of all supervisors and counselors;
- An ongoing consumer survey after the completion of meetings with a counselor;
- Public Hearings (2009);
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment results;
- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) 107 Review;
- The BRS Training Committee;

- Management reports,
- Manager, district director, consultant, and supervisor feedback.

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

Retention of our Qualified Staff

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

- BRS recruits staff that is committed to the importance of the work we do.
- 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.
- Two retirement incentives offered within the last seven years has resulted in many opportunities for staff promotions.

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.
- A Web Site Committee helped to redesign the bureau's website to ensure efficient and effective access to VR information electronically. The new site was launched June 2010.
- Other on-going committees that enable staff involvement include: Staff Training, Community Rehabilitation Providers, Transition, Asperger's and the Dartmouth/Johnson and Johnson Mental Health Project.

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

In 2008 BRS re-engaged in a process to create Individual Staff Development Plans (ISDP) with all employees. The bureau is currently initiating year three of its plan for each staff person 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; hopefully, it will foster commitments to remain employed with the bureau. In addition, the encouragement of staff development for areas in which they may work someday will build bench strength, which is an important component of the bureau's plan for succession. About 75% of staff have a written Individual Staff Development Plan.

New Performance System for Measuring Counselor Performance

In 2009, the bureau implemented a new evaluation system for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. The new system balanced a computerized report of each counselor's success in meeting federal standards and indicators, with the supervisor's assessment of softer skills such as counseling skills and ability to deal with people.

Succession Planning

The bureau lost 21 staff due to retirements in 2009. The bureau's succession planning has proved valuable as at least six veteran staff have been promoted to fill vacancies in the bureau. 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.
- Participate in Training Committee or Community Rehabilitation Providers Committee, Succession Committee, Management Information Committee, Labor Management Committee, and Forms Committee where members assume

leadership roles for training, policy development, and communication with other staff.

The training director was one of the key staff who retired in 2009. Following an eight-month vacancy, three consultants have been hired to run training initiatives. Each has assumed responsibility for one of the following categories: the training grant, new counselor training, and the training calendar. They are in the process of developing plans future training initiatives.

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.

- Connecticut Tech Act Project director provides training and consultation for bureau staff.
- All new counselors participated in an in-service training at the NEAT Center to learn about new adaptive equipment and solutions that can help consumers achieve employment success.
- Other in-service trainings on specific disability populations contain information on technological solutions for consumers.

Training Based on our Strategic Plan Goals

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 Culturally Diverse Consumers

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

In addition to the benefits gained by having a diverse staff, the bureau uses funds from its five-year in-service training grant to help fund diversity training. In 2009, the topic was Ethics and Diversity. The bureau met the standard set by RSA for serving culturally diverse consumers in 2009.

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 -Northern, Southern, Western

Croatian - Southern

French - Northern

French Italian - Southern

Hindi - Northern, Southern

Portuguese - Northern

Spanish - Northern, Southern, Western

Tagalog - Western

The bureau can also hire interpreters in most languages.

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

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

Tracking Consumers

System 7, a new Windows-based Management Information System (MIS), which will replicate the functions of the previous management system as well as provide the bureau with the capacity to operate within an electronic case

management environment, was launched in October 2009. Based on similar changes in other states, the bureau expects counselors to have more face-to-face time with consumers.

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

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

The bureau co-funds an 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.

Other Collaborative Initiatives

Collaborative initiatives are more fully identified in other sections of this plan. Joint training between the Department of Public Health, the Department of Special Education, the Special Education Resource Center, and the bureau began in 2009. The purpose of

this collaboration was to ensure success with transitioning youth with significant health care needs from school to managing their own health and planning for a career. The bureau continues its collaboration with the Department of Developmental Services to augment our joint training initiative last year on job placement for individuals on the Autism Spectrum. In addition, the bureau continues to participate in a joint committee that identifies strategies that will help individuals on the Spectrum gain successful employment. This committee provides training for our staff in addition to valuable services for individuals with Autism and their families. The bureau has continued its membership in and collaboration with the NEAT Center at Oak Hill. The bureau also continues its support of and involvement with the highly

successful summer Youth Leadership Forum and a summer workshop for transition students with significant disabilities. Both of these initiatives involve multiple state and community agencies.

This screen was last updated on Jun 29 2010 2:30PM by Evelyn Knight

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

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2011 (submitted FY 2010)

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 (or 17%) of 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 of 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. 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 was granted \$2.8 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 achieved 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 will be used to inform the Bureau's state plan goals, priorities and strategies.

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

**Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year
2011 (submitted FY 2010)**

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 Annual Estimates, Connecticut had 3,501,252 residents in 2008. From this number, 2,180,193 persons 18-64 years of age lived in the community; 8.2% of this population, 179,720 persons, had a disability.

Of the above 179,720 residents aged 18-64 with disabilities living in the community in 2008, 73,315 were employed: approximately 41%. The remaining 106,405 individuals of working age with disabilities are unemployed.

The US Census Bureau also estimated that 27,563 residents with disabilities aged 5-17 lived in the community in 2008, 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.

All of the above 106,405 individuals who are not currently working plus a considerable number of the transition-age individuals may be eligible for VR services. In addition, an unknown number of the 41% who are working may be under employed.

In a 1998 Harris poll of working-age people with disabilities that are unemployed, only four percent actively sought work and another seven percent were students or were receiving VR. Therefore, 14,736 individuals (11% of the 133,968 unemployed persons with disabilities and youths who may seek transition services) may need VR services. 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

Developing cost and service level projections for the FFY 2011 is a very challenging endeavor for the bureau. From the third quarter of FFY 2009 until June 2010, the bureau has managed multiple issues including, but not limited to, significant losses of veteran staff at all levels, a difficult conversion to a new management information system and the impact of a serious economic recession in CT. Given the atypical climate under which we have operated over the past year, it is difficult to establish a current or reliable baseline from which to project future costs. We will therefore proceed with all projections under the caveat that they are based upon historic trends and assumptions about improvements in the factors mentioned above.

For Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2010, the bureau projects that it will serve 4,309 eligible consumers in Individual Plans for

Employment (IPEs). This is a 22% decrease from FFY 2009, when 5,525 individuals received services under an IPE and far below projections made at this time last year. Two major factors contributed to the bureau's diminished capacity to implement new Employment Plans and serve consumers over the first three quarters of FFY 2010.

1. BRS lost over 17% of its VR counseling staff due to a Retirement Incentive Program offered by the state of Connecticut and an additional 8% to other forms of attrition in FFY 2009. Counseling resources were also unexpectedly further reduced due to substantial numbers of long-term leaves of absence. The loss of management and central office administrative staff to retirement continues to compound consumer capacity issues as veteran counselors are promoted, further depleting the field of available counselors. The bureau has and will continue to address this by refilling entry level counselor positions.

2. BRS launched a new electronic management information system (MIS) at the onset of FFY 2010. The implementation of System 7 was not a smooth transition as persistent technical and end user issues interfered with completion of plan approvals and initiation of services throughout the first half of the FFY 2010. Although the federal year statistics have and will continue to be impacted as a result of these difficult first six months, the bureau has worked with the contracted MIS vendor to address the vast majority of issues and has recently completed a statewide re-training on the system.

Given the bureau's ongoing need to rebuild capacity to serve and the staff's need for time to become proficient with System 7, BRS reasonably projects that 4,750 individuals will be served under an IPE for FFY 2011.

During FFY 2009, the bureau purchased services for 109 Consumers under Title VI part B of the Act, utilizing \$175,312. This represented a significant decrease in use of Title VI-B funds over FFY 2008 when \$297,533 was spent serving 147 Consumers.

Throughout FFY 2010, the bureau has utilized Title VI-B funds at a pace significantly lower than the FFY 2009 expenditure level. As of May 31, 2010, 78 (or 2%) of the - 3,924 consumers BRS has served under an IPE met the requirements of Title VI-B funds and were potentially eligible for this funding. From this pool of eligible consumers, 43 (or 55%) have been provided purchased services within FFY 2010 using Title VI-B with a total expenditure of \$75,063.

Based upon historical data, of the 4,750 individuals projected to receive services in FFY 2011, the bureau anticipates that 167 could potentially be funded under part B of Title VI. It is apparent that the bureau must undergo an intensive training effort to educate newer staff on the need to properly identify Supported Employment cases and the availability of the

dedicated funding for this population. It is fully expected that this training will occur at the onset of FFY 2011 and an upward trend in Title VI-B funds will ensue.

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 has provided additional resources, the bureau made an agency decision to not open Order of Selection due to insufficient staffing resources, as described above.

Costs of Services

Title I purchase of services (POS) costs for Priority #1 and Priority #2 consumers in FFY 2010 is projected to be approximately \$7 million. This amount is significantly lower than the FFY 2010 projections from a year ago when spending \$10.5 million appeared likely. As mentioned above, the bureau has experienced staffing issues and an unexpectedly difficult transition to a new caseload management system that have decreased our capacity to administer services at the level we forecasted. In addition to this, the impact of the economic downturn has certainly diminished POS expenditures for the provision of employment-related services and supports. This is exemplified by a 41.5% decrease in on-the-job supports provided in the first six months of FFY 2010 compared to the same time period in FFY 2009.

During the first six months of FFY 2010, the bureau also experienced significant declines in expenditures related to the purchase of hearing aids (58%), home modifications (89%), and vehicle modifications (66%). In FFY 2009, it became apparent that inconsistencies existed throughout the agency in the interpretation of BRS policies in providing these types of services that resulted in escalations of overall POS costs that could not be sustained in the future. To address this issue, BRS sought public input, issued new policy guidance, and trained all staff. This policy guidance, coupled with the loss of bureau personnel responsible for the coordination of home and vehicle modification services to retirement, stemmed the escalating expenditures that would have been impossible to maintain in the future.

Due to the uncertain economic climate of Connecticut, it is difficult to estimate cost projections for the FFY 2011 period. Statistics in the third quarter of FFY 2010 indicate that the bureau's productivity and expenditure patterns have begun to

increase. It is yet to be determined if this is a temporary increase or if it indicates a trend. Despite the uncertainty, the bureau is optimistic that, with increasing capacity provided as new staff gain experience, expenditures on POS will increase. With this in mind, the bureau projects a total POS of \$9,715,000 in FFY 2011. This includes \$9,500,000 in Title I and \$215,000 in ARRA POS expenditures.

Category	Title I or Title VI Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
Most Significant	\$5,829,000	2,850	\$2,045
Significant	\$3,886,000	1,900	\$2,045
			—
			—
			—
			—
			—
			—
			—
			—
Totals	\$9,715,000	4,750	\$2,045

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

**Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year
2011 (submitted FY 2010)**

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.

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

- BRS Public Meetings Feedback;
- State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Survey Results;
- Results of a Consumer Survey;
- Results of Key Informant Survey; and
- Results of a Counselor Survey.
- Annual Review of Report to RSA, 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
- State Department of Education
- Program Summaries of VR & SE Activities
- 704 Report of State Independent Living Services Program

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

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

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
- Independent Living Centers

- State agencies

Goal 5: To increase work attachments through the strategic use of ARRA funding.

Priority areas:

- Creation of employment division
- Incentives for CRPs
- Pre-employment skills for consumers

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.

This screen was last updated on Jun 29 2010 2:32PM by Evelyn Knight

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State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program

and

State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2011 (submitted FY 2010)

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.

Fiscal Resources and Cost Projections

We are estimating our current fiscal resources, including anticipated 110 funds, ARRA funds, state match, projected program income and carry forward funds to be approximately \$40,000,000 for FFY 2011. We are currently estimating expenditures of approximately \$ 29,300,000, but expenditures may increase depending on how quickly we are able to refill existing staff vacancies and how quickly recently hired staff becomes proficient in navigating consumers through the VR process. The current estimated carry forward (\$10.7 million) is expected to diminish significantly in FFY's 2012 and 2013 as personnel expenditures increase due to negotiated collective bargaining increases and continued escalations in the fringe benefit rate. It is anticipated that POS expenditures will rise dramatically above FFY 2010 levels as new counselors become increasingly productive and as we successfully implement outreach strategies designed to address identified unmet needs within our target populations.

Developing cost and service level projections for the FFY 2011 is a very challenging endeavor for the bureau. From the third quarter of FFY 2009 until the present, the bureau has managed multiple issues including, but not limited to, significant losses of veteran staff at all levels, a difficult conversion to a new management information system and the impact of serious economic recession in CT. Given the atypical climate under which we have operated over the past year, it is difficult to establish a current or reliable baseline from which to project future costs. We will therefore proceed with all projections under the caveat that they are based upon historic trends and assumptions about improvements in the factors

mentioned above.

We are estimating projected Title I purchase of service (POS) costs for Priority #1 and Priority #2 to be approximately \$9,500,000. ARRA POS is projected at \$215,000 bringing the total estimated POS for 2011 to \$9,715,000. This projection does not separate the costs by priority. These cost projections are based on serving the numbers of individuals identified in Attachment 4.11(b).

Based upon service levels and POS expenditure patterns in the preceding two years, the bureau had at the conclusion of FFY 2008 projected \$12.5 million in POS expenditures for Priorities #1 and #2 for FFY 2009. Even more concerning was a projection of a potential escalation in POS costs for FFY 2010 to \$13.5 million. Increases of this magnitude threatened the bureau's ability to continue providing services to Priority #2 eligible consumers. In response, the Bureau undertook an analysis of purchased services expenditures and trends. Three areas of POS appeared to be the primary drivers in the escalation of expenditures: the purchase of hearing aids, home modifications and vehicle modifications. In examining the expenditures in these areas, it became apparent that inconsistencies existed throughout the agency in the interpretation of BRS policies in providing these types of services. We addressed the concern through the issuance of new policy guidance, followed by training to all staff, while inviting public input as well. It was estimated that this new policy guidance would result in an annual saving in POS of approximately \$1.5 million, thus facilitating the Bureau's ability to continue services under the existing OOS, without service stoppages, in the years to come. As this policy guidance was only implemented during the second quarter of FY 2009, the need to monitor related POS expenditures over FY 2010 to ascertain the true fiscal impact was evident.

At the midpoint of FFY 2010 analysis of POS reveals dramatic declines in overall expenditure costs related to the purchase of hearing aids (58%), home modifications (89%), and vehicle modifications (66%). With decreases in nearly every POS expenditure area being present during this analysis it is difficult to ascertain the true fiscal impact of the policy guidance. Decreases in the total number of individuals served, as well as the bureau's diminished capacity to implement services certainly impacted these figures. With this in mind, the impact will continue to be monitored throughout FFY 2011 as service capacity and cumulative bureau caseload rebounds.

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. Projections for FFY 2011 display only a partial recovery compared to 2009 levels as the following challenges will 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 2010 and into 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

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.

Priority of categories to receive VR services under the order

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

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

2. (A) Have serious functional limitations in three or more functional areas (such as mobility, communication, self-care,

self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome; OR

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

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

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

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

Time Frames

All priority groups will have a determination of eligibility within 60 days unless there are mutually agreed upon extensions. For those not on the waiting list (Priority Group #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	Outcome goals 26s	Outcome goals 28s	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					

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

**Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year
2011 (submitted FY 2010)**

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

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

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

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

- Are individuals with the most significant disabilities and who have previously been unable to maintain competitive employment due to the severity of their disability;

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

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

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

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

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

These initiatives will reach more individuals with disabilities not typically engaged in long-term employment supports and

focuses on increasing employment and self-sufficiency.

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

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

**Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year
2011 (submitted FY 2010)**

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 MH agency
- o Measure: # of employment outcomes, as compared to previous year
- o Measure: earnings of individuals in comp. employment, as compared to previous year

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

- Strategy: Develop an Autism Task Force to make recommendations to BRS

o Measure: Recommendations are submitted to the Bureau for consideration

- 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: Create a 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: Create a 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

- 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
- Independent Living Centers
- State agencies

Objective 4.1: Create partnerships with Businesses.

- Strategy: Increase the use of On-the-Job Trainings
- o Measure: # of OJTs negotiated

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: Make establishment grants available to CRPs
- o Measure: # of awards with specific deliverable

Objective 4.3: Partner with Independent Living Centers.

- Strategy: Jointly implement summer workshops for young adults
- o Measure: # of participants in summer workshops

Objective 4.4: Partner with state agencies.

- Strategy: Work with Connect-Ability to implement employment-focused Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) with 4 state agencies.
- o Measure: MOA deliverables

Goal 5: To increase work attachments through the strategic use of ARRA funding.

Priority areas:

- Creation of employment division
- Incentives for CRPs
- Pre-employment skills for consumers

Objective 5.1: To enhance internal capacity for direct placement activities.

- Strategy: To create an internal Employment Division within BRS.
- o Measure: # of work attachments arranged by Employment Division staff (establish baseline in Year 1)

Objective 5.2: To create a performance-based structure for rapid job development and placement by CRPs.

- Strategy: Create bonus structures for OJT site development, assessment site development and direct placement.
- o Measure: # of work attachments that qualify for bonus (establish baseline in Year 1)

Objective 5.3: To create a mechanism for consumers to develop skills necessary for success in job interviews and job fairs.

- Strategy: Create a new Interview Preparedness service

- o Measure: # of participants in Interview Preparedness

- Strategy: Implement a “Prep Rally” series to prepare consumer for successful participation in job fairs

- o Measure: # of attendees at Prep Rallies

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

- Strategies to provide Assistive Technology services;

- Strategies to address equitable access to services;

- Strategies for improving community rehabilitation programs; and

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

Strategies to provide Assistive Technology services:

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

- Develop resources for VR consumers to access the Assistive Technology devices and services they need for work, school and community living.

- Train VR counselors to increase knowledge regarding the use of Assistive Technology for successful employment outcomes.

- Provide guidance and Technical Assistance to VR counselors in obtaining appropriate Assistive Technology evaluations, interpreting reports and providing appropriate devices and services to VR consumers.

- Encourage participation in the CT Tech Act Project’s programs, such as the Computer Loan Program for college students; getATstuff online recycling classifieds; AT device demonstrations and low-interest financial loans, when appropriate.

The CT Tech Act Project will be developing an AT device lending library specifically for VR consumers that will contain

frequently requested items for consumers to borrow and use during On the Job Trainings, Working Evaluations, Working Interviews, etc. This will allow consumers to try out devices in the work place and/or have the device they need in order to be successful while the VR activities are taking place.

Strategies to address equitable access to services

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

- Identify best practices for providing culturally appropriate VR services. For the Latino population, we will use the Bureau's Latino committee to assist in the identification of best practices.
- Provide training to disseminate best practices.
- Conduct outreach to minority populations through community organizations and faith-based organizations to improve minority access under both the VR and Supported Employment Programs.

Strategies for improving Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP)

- The Bureau has a sufficient number of CRPs to support the needs of the VR program. Our efforts, therefore, are targeted at improvements to the current structure rather than the establishment or development of new programs. We will explore establishment grants for the purposes of establishing new programs within existing CRPs.
- Gaps in services from the CRP community exist in populations where English is not the primary language, particularly those who use ASL or Spanish as their primary language. The Bureau is offering rate differentials and technical assistance to CRPs that wish to expand their capacity to provide services to people who are deaf or Spanish speaking.
- The Bureau has an internal committee comprised of staff at all levels of the organization, as well as representatives of CRP organizations, to report and address concerns related to CRP's. The Bureau will continue meetings of the CRP Committee to strengthen partnerships between BRS and CRPs.
- The Bureau will encourage use of a Consumer Choice Handbook for Assessment Services. This handbook offers descriptions of the individual components and purposes of individual services provided by CRPs.
- The Bureau will continue joint trainings of CRP and BRS staff to enhance better understanding of program implementation to achieve maximum success for consumers.

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

- Connecticut operates a Disability Navigator grant from the federal Department of Labor. The Bureau has established working relationships with the Navigators, and will continue to work collaboratively to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.
- Each of the One Stop Centers has an assigned a staff liaison from the Bureau.
- In four of the state's One Stop Career Centers, the Bureau's offices are co-located.
- The Bureau continues its partnerships related to the Walgreens Distribution Center, sharing this model with other employers as a promising practice. This initiative will lead to employment for at least 250 Connecticut residents with disabilities, and has connected the Bureau more strategically with the Office of Workforce Competitiveness and the Department of Economic and Community Development.
- The Bureau will continue its role as chair of the "Everyone Works Committee" at one of the state's workforce centers, bringing community agencies and consumers together to discuss mechanisms for better access for individuals with disabilities in the One Stop System.

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State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program

and

State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2011 (submitted FY 2010)

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 2009 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, as measured by consumer satisfaction.

Priority Areas:

- a. customer service;
- b. communication;
- c. case management system; and
- d. implementation of the plan for stimulus funding.

a. Customer Service

State Rehabilitation Council Survey: The consumer satisfaction survey generated by the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) continued to be a valuable tool to measure consumer satisfaction after meeting with a counselor. Every consumer was given an opportunity to fill out the questionnaire after his or her appointment. In 2009, the results of the survey indicate nearly 80% of our consumers who completed a survey (232) were satisfied overall with their meeting. The results of all questionnaires are passed on to the District Director for immediate follow-up, if needed. Surveys are then sent to the

SRC to evaluate and track results. Information gained from the surveys aids the SRC in commenting on overall consumer satisfaction with BRS.

Returning Phone Calls: Staff continued efforts to provide good customer service by returning phone calls within 48 hours when possible. Even with the loss of a significant numbers of staff and subsequent reassignments, staff reported meeting this measure about 66of the time. In offices where staff is covering a caseload in addition to their own due to staff vacancies, it is difficult to return all calls with 48 hours.

Scheduling Appointments within Two Weeks: Staff retirements, subsequent reassignments, and leaves of absences had a sever impact on the bureau's ability to schedule appointments within two weeks after the initial call. In addition, considerable training time was needed to prepare for the new case management program, System 7. The bureau managed to see consumers in 2/3 of the state within two weeks of the initial call. Meeting the two-week time limit for the first appointment was difficult in 1/3 of offices due to staff shortages.

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.

b. Communication

Multilingual Staff: We believe that our multilingual staff is also important to serving consumers, including minority consumers, effectively. Current languages spoken by our staff include American Sign Language, Croatian, French, French Italian, Hindi, Portuguese, Spanish, and Tagalog. We hire interpreters to meet the communication needs of consumers that our staff cannot meet.

c. Case Management System

The bureau replaced its management information system with System 7, a Web-based data management system in October 2009. In order to prepare for this new case management information system, staff invested considerable time in contributing to program plans for System 7 and with learning this new system. Once staff become proficient in its use and

further enhancements of the product itself occurs, the system should enable a more stream-lined interaction between consumers and staff and more efficient management of VR data.

d. ARRA Stimulus Initiative

Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, BRS has received \$2.8 million to create innovative strategies and systems change to improve employment outcomes for Connecticut residents with disabilities. BRS collaborated with Connect-Ability, the Bureau of Education Services for the Blind (BESB), and the Department of Labor (DOL) to maximize the use of the state's allotment of ARRA funds dedicated to employment initiatives.

Outreach to Employers: The Employment Division was formed within BRS to more effectively respond to the employment needs of Consumers and Businesses in Connecticut. The division consists of a Director of Employer Development and six Employment Consultant Positions that are strategically placed throughout the state to assist consumers with entry into the state's workforce. All seven positions have been made possible through ARRA funding. The Employment Division is developing approaches to deliver quality services to employers that include the following:

- Pre-screened Applicants
- On-the-Job Training / Internships
- Risk-Free Trial (Working Interviews)
- Tax Credit Program Information
- Information on Becoming an Employment Network

Data for the success of the program will be collected and disseminated over the coming year.

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

Priority areas:

- a. individuals from minority backgrounds;
- b. young adults with disabilities;

- c. individuals with psychiatric disabilities;
- d. individuals with autism spectrum disorders; and
- e. individuals with disabilities on public assistance (VR/TANF Project).

a. Minority students

Counselors have been embedded in urban high schools to provide minority students with easy access to vocational rehabilitation services.

Latino counselors 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

Web-Based Navigational Tool for Young Adults: In 2009, this site generated 22,481 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.

Transition Initiatives: Three Transition Brochures for young adults; parents/families; and school systems have been revised so they have a contemporary look and updated information. The brochures for young adults and parents describe BRS, transition services, eligibility requirements, referral options, and income guidelines. The brochure for school systems describes how BRS can help school systems with transition planning for students.

Transition resources and a 74-piece Transition Toolkit available on the BRS Web site at <http://www.brs.state.ct.us/SchoolToWork/index.htm> 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.

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.

We have been working with SCSU for the last three years to develop evening workshops for parents and students to emphasize the skills needed for employment beyond with students develop 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. The expectation is to document these workshops to be replicated with other colleges.

c. Consumers with Psychiatric Disabilities

The Bureau has a more effective working relationship with the mental health system in Connecticut by having a co-funded central office consultant and by embedding three counselors in community mental health agencies. The research component initiated last year will further strengthen our collaborative approaches. Some initial data from the research through the University of Connecticut indicates that both consumers and staff are very satisfied with the Evidence Based Practice of finding employment and providing the supports that the consumers need. It will take several years to determine whether our current strategies will impact the rehabilitation rate for this population. Significant numbers of our consumers are transition age, so they will remain in the system several years before they complete their plans for employment.

d. Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

For the fourth year, the ASD Committee (a clinical team) provided a forum for consumers on the Autism Spectrum, family members, providers and counselors to jointly discuss services, recommendations, and strategies to assist consumers

seeking employment help. BRS pays for a psychologist to work with the team.

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

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

e. Individuals using Public Assistance

BRS presently has three state-funded Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) counselors on staff to screen TANF consumers who do not comply with their employment plans. A fourth position is currently vacant. The TANF consumers may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services related to mental health, substance abuse and/or learning disabilities.

Goal 3: To increase access to services for all individuals with disabilities, as measured by numbers of applications in underserved populations listed in Goal 2 and additional locations of services for individuals that are deaf.

Priority areas:

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

a. Awareness of Services

Connect-Ability's comprehensive marketing and communication campaign of television 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. Our new case management system currently under development will be web-based. We are maximizing our effort to provide information to consumers, employers and other stakeholders electronically. We also maintain person-to-person contact as staff still answers phones.

Connecticut Tech Act Project: The goal of the Connecticut Tech Act Project (CTTAP) is to increase access to and acquisition of Assistive Technology (AT) devices and services needed for work, school, and community living. The Tech Act Project provides access to AT demonstrations, AT device loans, recycling and reutilization of AT. The CTTAP opened a new AT demonstration and recycling center, the Eastern CT Assistive Technology Center, in the eastern region of the state. With this center, consumers in all regions of Connecticut have access to AT demonstrations. The CTTAP provides training and technical assistance to VR counselors and consumers to help identify appropriate AT devices and services for successful employment, with an emphasis on youth who are transitioning from secondary schools to work and/or post-secondary education.

CTTAP training highlights for FY2009 include the following:

- Approximately 1,092 individuals participated in more than 25 trainings and public awareness events;
- Public awareness activities that include printed materials, such as newsletters, brochures, and postcards reached approximately 5,100 individuals;
- The CTTAP Web site had 21,430 unique visitors;
- 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 \$104,867 in funds to BRS consumers.

b. Vocational Services for Consumers that are Deaf

BRS offers technical assistance to other CRPs that wish to expand their capacity to provide services to consumers who are deaf.

BRS staff has met with the CRPs to provide information, consultation and staff training regarding capacity building. BRS rehabilitation counselors for the deaf (RCDs) have also made referrals of both consumers and prospective staff that have the necessary qualifications to work with this population to these CRPs. BRS has provided information about training available for serving this specialized population, and BRS continues to assist the CRPS as needed. The RCDs report on-going partnerships and some very successful collaboration with these CRPs.

Despite these efforts described above, there are presently only six CRP's now providing services to consumers who are deaf. In an effort to increase this capacity, effective July 1, 2010 BRS will offer increased fee for service rates for consumers requiring sign language interpretation. Historically, BRS has not offered such rate differential to CRP's related to the disability of the consumers being served. The differential being offered has been determined sufficient to hire a qualified sign language interpreter to work in tandem with a CRP staff. If the CRP has individuals on staff fluent in sign language, this rate increase can be utilized as increased compensation that could lead to better retention of staff within CRP's.

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

Priority areas:

- a. Board of Education and Services for the Blind (CT-Blind)
- b. businesses
- c. Connect to Work Center,
- d. Community Rehabilitation Providers
- e. Independent Living Centers.

a. Board of Education and Services for the Blind

Board of Education and Services for the Blind (CT-Blind) was a key partner with the bureau's ARRA initiative. BRS and BESB worked together to create a statewide approach to make it easier for businesses to understand our message.

b. Businesses

Business Leadership Network: The CT Business Leadership Network continues to grow with a total of 150 members representing 70 companies. 10 ADA and 15 disability awareness were delivered to 15 businesses. Connecticut employers were surveyed to determine the best practices in recruitment, hiring and retention of people with disabilities and selected three companies as top employers in Connecticut. We also worked with the state Department of Labor to institute an employer designation on the CT Job Central website allowing employers to post job openings encouraging people with disabilities to apply. During Disability Employment Awareness month, over 175 mentees participated in activities from mock interviews, company tours, and company overviews with approximately 50 employers.

Model Employer: A "Model Employer" packet identifying best practices for employers was designed, printed and disseminated to employers.

One Stop Centers: The bureau has continued its practice of assigning a liaison counselor to each One Stop Center. We co-locate counselors within four of our One-Stop Centers.

Walgreens Project: The bureau is the lead administrator of the training program for prospective employees with disabilities

at the new Walgreens Distribution Center in Windsor, Connecticut. The following agencies collaborated on this initiative: the Connecticut Departments of Social Services, Developmental Services, Labor, Education, Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Board of Education and Services for the Blind, Connecticut Office of Workforce Competitiveness, the United Way of Connecticut and Community Enterprises.

Walgreens achieved its goal to hire consumers with disabilities in at least one-third of its estimated 800 positions. The pre-employment training for prospective Walgreens employees who require this additional preparation in order to succeed in employment at the distribution center is administered by the United Way of Connecticut and Community Enterprises; 125 individuals participated in the program; 85 have secured employment with Walgreens.

National Employment Team (NET): The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) is actively working with businesses, consumers and VR state agencies to develop a national VR-business network. The vision is to create a coordinated approach to serving business customers through a national VR team that specializes in employer development, business consulting and corporate relations. Connecticut VR has taken an active role in developing business partnerships that will have a direct effect on the increased hiring of individuals with disabilities in Connecticut and VR consumers across the nation.

The NET and the VR agencies have been working together in identifying large employers that have offices in multiple states. We have had numerous teleconferences and Web trainings to access these companies. In doing so, Connecticut has had hires in the following companies: Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Wachovia, H&R Block, CVS, and Walgreens. This partnership with the CSAVR Business Net has proven to be a resource and a marketing component for the VR system, benefiting the VR consumer, VR counselor and businesses: a sure “win-win” for everyone.

c. Connect to Work Center

Connect-Ability carries out its mission by continuing its efforts to develop into a premier resource center for employment information and bringing together training, outreach, technical assistance, product development, policy change, legislative initiatives and dissemination components. As a single-point of entry, this in-state technical assistance center assists key stakeholders in navigating Connecticut’s employment system for job seekers and employees with disabilities. The

following are highlights in:

Transportation: Over the past year, the transportation workgroup met bi-monthly to address transportation barriers to employment for people with disabilities. This workgroup discussed a web-based trip planner, accessible taxis, a cost calculator and a Transportation Resource Directory. New Getting on Board Transportation Guides were published. In addition, three Transportation Workshops were conducted in collaboration with the Connecticut Association for Community where over 225 people attended.

Benefit Offset on Employment for SSDI Beneficiaries: This Connect to Work pilot addresses several of our goals including increasing self-support, consumer satisfaction, and quality of services for consumers. We are all familiar with the “cliff” for individuals receiving SSDI that choose to return to work. Connecticut is very proud to be one of four states testing another model that we believe will allow individuals to grow their income instead.

A total of 265 people enrolled in the 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.

Local Level Pilots (LLP): The Connect-Ability strategic planning initiative to develop and implement innovative plans on the local level granted nine awards in April 2009. Each local level pilot received \$200,000 to implement plans to initiate change, improve access, build broad-based constituency, and increase employment for individuals with disabilities. The LLPs were evaluated to assess structure and process. The initiative endeavored to develop creative, effective, and sustainable infrastructure change through local organizations. The pilot initiative resulted in new programs, program changes, policy changes, information dissemination, new networks, and promising practices. Connect-Ability presented lessons learned from the pilots’ school-to-work priority area at the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant/Demonstration to Maintain Independence and Employment (MIG/DMIE) Conference in Pittsburg.

Marketing: The 4th Annual Employment Summit was a huge success outlining how businesses can utilize the economic

stimulus to promote the recruitment and hiring of people with disabilities. 24,000 unique visitors used the Connect-Ability website to obtain information. The Job Seeker toolkit was repackaged for dissemination and has been widely distributed at job fairs and via email and phone requests. Additionally, three new television spots, radio ads and print and website banners were produced highlighting employment success stories on individuals with disabilities in different professions. We continue to make strides and contributions to the national marketing campaign. Due to these efforts, Connect-Ability has responded to approximately 400 calls and inquiries.

Transition: BRS began developing a workbook of the independent living modules that were developed during the three years we did summer workshops. The Connect-Ability School to Work Transition Workgroup has drafted these modules and they expect be published this year in workbook form and are being developed into a distance-learning package to be posted on the Connect-Ability website.

d. Community Rehabilitation Providers

Performance Based Payment System for CRPs: The bureau employs a performance-based reimbursement model regarding job placement services received from CRP's. Specifically our job placement, On-the-Job Training Opportunity Development and community-based assessment Site Development service models are milestone driven. Fees paid to CRP's increase incrementally when the development of an acceptable job site is secured, the consumer is hired, and the consumer keeps the job for 90 days. With ARRA funding available, additional compensation has been provided to CRP's for developing job opportunities within specified time periods.

Disability Program Navigators (DPN): Connecticut received a Disability Navigator Grant from the federal Department of Labor. BRS has provided training to the Navigators on the basics of benefits and vocational rehabilitation. While the DPNs are not yet serving as CRPs, they are part of the community network. The regional staff is currently developing a system for efficient and effective referrals. During FFY 2009, we strengthened our partnership with DPNs through continued cross training and collaboration on employment and Ticket to Work. Two DPNs also joined a Connect-Ability training on work incentives.

Additional Challenges

Management Information System

BRS implemented VR System 7 as a replacement of the Integrated Client Information System (ICIS) in October 2009. Despite a lengthy development and preparation period prior to attempting to fully “go live” with this new electronic caseload management system, the implementation was extremely difficult and all four goals listed in this section were to some degree impacted by this. Upon implementation of the system, delays in processing cases through the system quickly ensued and staff invested a great deal of time working to overcome technical issues with cases at nearly every stage of the VR process. The system conversion also has presented challenges in the area of data analysis as traditional management reports that track statistical productivity and qualitative outcome measures were not available for several months.

From October 2009 to June 2010 the functioning of the System 7 has improved, but further enhancements and adjustments are required for the full potential of System 7 to be realized. There is much opportunity for the further automation of certain aspects of the BRS business processes to occur and efficiencies to be realized. The potential also exists to expand the availability of information that is captured by the system and this will enhance our ability to analyze data relevant to our pursuit of each of the four goals in more detail. To this end, the bureau continues to work closely with our contracted MIS vendor, Libera Inc, to address outstanding issues.

Revenue Generation

BRS has additional financial resources primarily from grants written by the Connect to Work Center. This has allowed us to fund the salaries of seven CWIC counselors from grant funds. The challenge will be to find the financial resources to fund this valuable service to consumers when the grant ends. In addition, we have mentioned the need for more funds to serve transition students from grants or increased state and federal funding.

Strategies to Reach Goals

The sections above described some of the bureau’s specific activities relative to agency goals. We also implemented a set of strategies that crossed many of the goal areas. These strategies include the following:

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

Case Services Budget

Costs of Services: Title I purchased services (POS) costs for Priority I and Priority II consumers in FFY 2010 is projected to be approximately \$7 million. This amount is significantly lower than the FFY 2010 projections from a year ago when spending \$10.5 million appeared likely. As mentioned above, the bureau has experienced staffing issues and an unexpectedly difficult transition to a new caseload management system that have decreased our capacity to administer services at the level we forecasted. In addition to this, the impact of the economic downturn has certainly diminished POS expenditures related to the provision of employment related services and supports. This is exemplified by a 41.5%

decrease in on the job supports provided when comparing the first six months of FFY 2009 versus the same time period in FFY 2010.

During the first six months of FFY 2010 the bureau has also experienced significant declines in expenditures related to the purchase of hearing aids (58%), home modifications (89%), and vehicle modifications (66%). In FFY 2009 it became apparent that inconsistencies existed throughout the agency in the interpretation of BRS policies in providing these types of services and this was resulting in escalations of overall POS costs that would not be sustainable into the future. This issue was addressed through the issuance of new policy guidance, inviting public input, and training all staff. This policy guidance, coupled with the loss of bureau personnel responsible for the coordination of home and vehicle modification services to retirement, has further driven expenditures in these areas downward.

Due to the uncertain economic climate of Connecticut it is difficult to estimate cost projections for the FFY 2011 period. During the third quarter of FFY 2010 indications that the bureau's statistical productivity and expenditure patterns have begun to increase. It is yet to be determined if this is a temporary uptick or it is indicative of a trend. Despite the uncertainty, the bureau is optimistic that with increasing capacity to be provided as new staff gain experience that expenditures on POS will increase. With this in mind, the bureau projects a total POS of \$9,715,000 in FFY 2011.

The bureau maintains the following goals for managing our fiscal resources:

1. Optimize Delivery of VR Services
 - a. Maintain proper balance between staff & purchased services;
2. Provide VR services without interruptions
 - a. No Service stoppages or waiting list;
3. Maintain current Order of Selection (OOS)
 - a. Serve all Priority #1 and #2; and

4. Optimize Available Revenue

- a. Program Income;
- b. Re-allotment Funds;
- c. Liquidating all available money (i.e., avoid lapsing money).

Technical Assistance Requested from RSA

We will continue to welcome technical assistance with:

1. Enhancing our collaboration with Independent Living Centers;
2. Generating parental and community support that will insure transition students from urban high schools successfully reach their employment goals;
3. Performance based contracting systems for Community Rehabilitation Providers; and
4. Increasing income for recipients of SSI and SSDI.

2. Identify all supported employment program goals consistent with the goals described in Attachment 4.11(c)(4), including an evaluation of the extent to which the supported employment program goals were achieved.

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

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 our blended services options for providing supported employment services to consumers.

The focus in 2007 was on the new Ticket to Work Partnership Plus Model (released in the spring of 2008), along with other established employment services programs such as the Employment Opportunities Program administered by BRS. Other vocational services, supported employment programs, One-Stop employment programs and private Employment Networks under the Ticket program are involved in this statewide endeavor to coordinate ongoing employment services to mutually serve consumers.

Supported Employment Strategies

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

- 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;
- 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.

Accomplishments

In FFY 2009, we provided federal supported employment services to 109 consumers. This is a 25% decline from FFY 2008 when 147 consumers received Supported Employment services. These declines can be attributed to the loss of veteran staff at all levels of the bureau, an overall decline in the bureau's cumulative caseload size and recently hired staff

not having full command of the available resources. As mentioned in section 4.11(b), it is evident that the bureau must undergo an agency-wide training endeavor specific to the availability of Supported Employment funds and this will take place over the course of FFY 2011.

In FY 2009, 15 BRS partners became Employment Networks due to the collaborative efforts BRS developed in the previous three years. This collaboration and new guidelines enabled consumers receiving benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA) to receive employment supports after successfully closing their BRS case in employment. These employment supports, customized to meet the consumer's needs, focused on job retention and increasing a consumer's ability to become independent from SSA benefits.

3. Provide an Assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY 2009.

Standards and Indicators

The bureau met the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) standards and indicators in FFY 2009 in the following manner:

Indicator 1.1 - Change in employment outcome from previous year: (≥ 0) #-25

The bureau closed 25 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: ($\geq 58\%$) #58.4%

The bureau had a rehabilitation rate of 58.4%. Therefore, we passed this Indicator.

Indicator 1.3 – Of consumers who achieved employment, percent w/competitive employment: ($\geq 72.6\%$) #99.5%

The bureau had a competitive outcome rate of 99.5%. Therefore, we passed this Indicator.

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

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

Indicator 1.5 – Earnings ratio – hourly wage competitive employment to hourly wage of all employed in state ($\geq .52$) #.66
The bureau had an average earnings ratio of .66 when compared to the state average earnings. Therefore, we passed this Indicator.

Indicator 1.6 – Self-support at closure VS self-support at application (≥ 53) #29.6%

The bureau failed this Indicator as 29.6% of our successful outcomes went from not self-supporting to self-supporting at closure.

Indicator 2.1 – Ratio of minority population to nonminority population ($\geq .80$) #.82

The bureau had a minority service rate that was .82 of the service rate for consumers from non-minority backgrounds. Therefore, we passed this Indicator.

Initiatives to Increase Self-Support for All Consumers

Benefits Counseling: Benefits counseling is recommended to all consumers on benefits. Basic information can be provided by VR counseling staff. Triage is done so that the seven Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs) are able to provide counseling to those who are likely to see changes in eligibility for a variety of state and federal benefit programs based on how much they plan to earn. Asset building tools and information on maximizing self sufficiency are provided to consumers as part of their counseling sessions. Under our new Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) award, there is a strong emphasis on prioritizing who needs individual benefits counseling sessions. By triaging, we can use our limited resources more effectively.

Additional Activities:

- Quality control measures include:
 - o Consumer satisfaction survey for benefits counseling services showed an overall satisfaction rate of 4.7 out of 5; and
 - o Peer review is conducted every three months for quality control and as a learning tool to share best practices.

- Continued collaboration and training with state agencies, community providers, schools and BRS.
- There were 106 presentations conducted, reaching an estimated audience of 2225 people.

Asset Building Workshops: CWICs provide Asset Building Workshops to assist consumers with mental illness in learning skills to enhance their financial circumstances so they may get out of poverty. Similar workshops have been done for State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) professional staff as part of systems change efforts by that department. Consumers need the positive support of service providers to maximize employment outcomes and increased quality of life. Similar work is being done for DMHAS in the area of consumers involved in supportive housing programs. These presentations will be continuing over the next year. Referrals from these programs will increase as providers become more aware of our benefits counseling services and the value of work in the lives of those they serve.

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

Minority Consumers

The bureau worked diligently to meet the RSA National Standard and Indicator 2.1 for FFY 2009 and as a result this goal was achieved. We ended FFY 2009 with a Minority Ratio of .82, which exceeds the national standard of .80. We have continued to closely monitor agency performance related to this measure and on June 1, 2010, our year-to-date (YTD) performance for the indicator was .78.

We continue to be pleased that our percentage of minority consumers served under IPE's (27.5%) is similar to the percentage of the minority population of our state (25%). We are also pleased that our hiring practices have resulted in diversity of our staff similar to or greater than the diversity of Connecticut. We currently have 32.8%% of our staff from diverse backgrounds compared to a 25% non-white population of Connecticut.

We have implemented the following "best practices" for serving minority consumers:

Urban Schools: We believe that we will increase our success with achieving the minority indicator and self-support by placing additional counselors in urban high schools.

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

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

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

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

4. Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in FY 2009.

Use of Title 1 Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

In this section of our report on progress, we will update activities since our last state plan. The following tables lists Innovation and Expansion (I&E) projects. We have used a variety of funding sources for I&E projects, but the table includes only Title I funding.

- Bridgeport Mental Health Transition Project \$0
- Healthy and Ready to Work \$0
- Improving Employment Outcomes for SSI/SSDI Recipients \$488

- Research Project – Embedded Mental Health Counselors \$ 0
- State Independent Living Council of CT (SILC) \$166,138
- State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) \$ 14,331
- Youth Leadership Forum \$7,500
- Youth Scholarships \$0

Total funding for Innovation and Expansion \$188,457

Description of Innovation and Expansion Projects

The next section of this report provides additional information on the innovation and expansion projects funded through designated funds. This section also includes innovative projects that provide for expansion that was funded through Title 1 or other funding sources.

Bridgeport Mental Health Transition Project (Goal 2)

BRS has concluded its part in this project with the Bridgeport School System to provide additional support for transition students. The school system has incorporated it into the daily schedule for students with disabilities.

Healthy and Ready to Work – Youth with Progressive Disabilities (Goal 2)

The Bureau received \$10,000 from the Connecticut Department of Health to improve services for youth with progressive disabilities. In addition to the Department of Health, the Bureau collaborated with the Department of Education's State Educational Resource Center (SERC) to provide training for transition staff from schools and BRS counselors on successful techniques for helping students with progressive disabilities assume responsibility for their own health care while at the same time starting their career.

Improving Employment Outcomes for SSI and SSDI Recipients (Goal 2)

A new Innovation and Expansion project was initiated this year in our Southern Region to determine whether increased supports would increase employment outcomes for some of our consumers receiving SSI and SSDI. The supports were

provided in tandem with VR services such as counseling, guidance, work evaluations, work interviews, short term training, on-the-job training, job placement and job coaching. The specific goals of this I & E project are:

1. To ensure consumers are engaged with BRS and employment related activities on a regular basis (at least once per week);
2. To find solutions to the barriers interfering with employment;
3. To increase successful closures of SSI and SSDI recipients by at least 10% (the current employment outcome rate in CT hovers around 40%);
4. To maximize similar benefits and community collaborations; and
5. To determine feasibility of marketing similar approaches to Employment Networks.

The pilot began as scheduled on October 1, 2008. Six referrals were submitted by counseling staff to launch the pilot. However, after team consultation on the referrals, only four of the six were designated as solid candidates for the pilot. One consumer not selected actually required vocational interventions as a precursor to entering the pilot. The second consumer was already employed and therefore not part of the target group.

At this point, the pilot concept appears to be a viable model to consider for Employment Networks. Areas to improve include consumer selection, referral outline, and Community Rehabilitation Provider expectations. The Bureau will report on this project again next year.

Research Project on Embedded Mental Health Counselors (Goal 2)

The University of Connecticut was selected to measure the outcomes and effective practices of integrating vocational rehabilitation staff within the mental health treatment teams of three large mental health agencies. The project design is based on Evidence-Based Practices, including the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model. BRS staff was trained on the philosophy of Evidence-Based Practice during the previous three years of this project.

Three BRS liaison counselors were co-located in early 2006 on mental health treatment teams to develop collaborative

strategies for improving employment outcomes for shared consumers. In its role as project researchers, the University of Connecticut is measuring outcomes and effective practices for this integrated service delivery model. Initial results suggest a high level of satisfaction on the part of consumers and staff of both agencies. Comprehensive data analysis is underway on 48 of the 87 consumers who participated in this pilot program and is scheduled to be concluded by December 2010.

The number of pilot participants does not reflect the additional learning that has occurred with the BRS and DMHAS teams. The feedback from the vocational rehabilitation counselors and DMHAS has been very positive. Team building and trust have allowed the staff to build momentum. The University of Connecticut (UCONN) evaluators will also follow-up with the participants on their level of satisfaction.

The counselor liaisons will continue to work with their mental health counterparts to train staff in both systems on effective collaborative practices. Training for bureau staff is currently in the planning stages based on the outcomes of the evaluation by UCONN. The bureau is considering implementing aspects of the Evidence-Based Practice (using the employment setting as a focus for support services rather than addressing all employment challenges prior to employment) with other consumer populations. The research data will be useful to determine whether this will become a promising rehabilitation practice for the BRS.

State Independent Living Council (SILC) (Goal 4)

In spite of full support of its resource plan by the bureau, the State Independent Living Council (SILC) faced significant challenges during the year which impacted the implementation of the SPIL. In light of the state's financial crisis and a decline in the fiscal and personnel resources of the CILs, the 2008 – 2010 SPIL was amended to allow for redistribution of funds originally intended for expansion of IL services within the state. The funds, \$90,000 over two years per CIL, were redirected to support the basic operation of the CILs. The amended SPIL, officially approved by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in January 2009, focused on strengthening the existing network of CILs in Connecticut and expanding funding resources to lessen dependence on state funds.

The expenditure of the Title VII, Part B funds which support the activities of the SPIL was complicated by a six month gap

in filling the Executive Director position at the SILC, and the interpretation by RSA that all Part B expenditures must go through the state procurement process. In spite of this, a number of initiatives supporting specific goals and objectives were accomplished:

- Although CIL state budgets were in jeopardy, the SILC hosted an IL Day at the Capitol in March 2009. This event focused on increasing the awareness of the role centers have in providing independent living services and reducing barriers within the community. Over 100 advocates, consumers, and legislators, were in attendance.
- In June 2009, the SILC collaborated with the Disability Advocacy Collaborative, the UCONN Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities, and the Connecticut Downs Syndrome Congress to host a one day workshop titled 'The Promise of Olmstead: Past, Present, and Future. The focus was to increase public awareness of deinstitutionalization and improve community options. The event was televised and included a lead plaintiff in the Olmstead Decision.
- The SILC collaborated with the CT Developmental Disabilities Council, the Department of Public Health, and numerous community-based advocacy agencies, to plan POWERFEST 2009, scheduled for October. POWERFEST 2009 is a conference for young people between ages 14 – 24. Over 100 youth were expected to attend workshops focused on issues related to youth transition, self empowerment, and relationship building.
- Throughout 2009, a committee worked to develop consistency in coding IL services so that all five CILs will be in agreement when collecting data and reporting on the Federal 704 Report. The SILC also provided the funding for the CIL voting representative to attend the CIL net training in Tennessee, which focused on how to use technology to promote CIL organizational capacity.

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) (Goal 4)

BRS uses the innovation and expansion authority, as specified by the Rehabilitation Act, to support the functions of the State Rehabilitation Council. In 2009, the SRC 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 funded the Youth Leadership Forum and provided a scholarship to one of its graduating participants for the second year. See Attachment 4.2(c) for more information on the SRC.

Summer Workshops – Independent Living (IL) for Transition Students (Goal 2)

Based on the information learned from the workshops conducted the past three years, the Connect-Ability School to Work

Transition Workgroup has drafted independent living modules that will be published as a workbook and added to the Connect-Ability website as a distance learning package.

Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)

BRS is the major event sponsor for the Youth Leadership Forum contributing \$10,000 to support this event in FFY 2009. The SRC also contributed \$5,000 in FFY 2009. In addition, Department of Social Services and Bureau personnel help plan and staff the event. This annual forum hosts 40 high school juniors and seniors with physical and mental disabilities on the main campus of the University of Connecticut. YLF is an educational and motivational conference that is conducted in an intense four-day schedule. Throughout the training, small work groups explore personal leadership and career plans. Guest speakers, including successful individuals with disabilities, address such topics as disability rights laws, innovations in technology, leadership skills and resources at all levels.

Adults with disabilities, who have successfully maneuvered through many obstacles the participants encounter, serve as faculty and staff. Many other volunteers, some with disabilities, help make the program a success. After the four-day forum, YLF participants must achieve goals they establish in their team Community Action Leadership Plans. BRS and the Department of Education staff, representatives of the SRC, and former delegates helped develop and implement this program. BRS employees provide staff to the YLF and four BRS employees are board members of the Youth Leadership Project, Inc., the YLF parent organization. BRS counselors also interview potential delegates to assist in the selection process.

Youth Scholarships (Goal 2)

The bureau funded two scholarships for Youth with Disabilities. Each scholarship was \$2,500. The Bureau also collaborated with the Governors Coalition for Youth with Disabilities by providing BRS staff to help judge all scholarship applications.

This screen was last updated on Jun 29 2010 2:35PM by Evelyn Knight

This attachment was originally submitted to RSA as part of a prior State Plan in FY 2009 and was last updated 06/30/2009.

**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
2011 (submitted FY 2010)**

Attachment 6.3 Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

- Describe quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities
- Describe the timing of the transition to extended services

Quality, Scope, and Extent of
Supported Employment Services

Program Status

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (the Bureau or BRS) is allocated \$255,000 annually for the Title VI, Part B Funds and expects to expend all of its allocation. The Bureau continues to focus on the quality service delivery system for the Supported Employment Services funding through collaborations with our state and local community rehabilitation service partners for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2009. In previous years, attention has been specific to the areas of community rehabilitation provider (CRP) and vocational rehabilitation counseling staff training; establishing quality standards and minimum requirements of direct service staff; and reviewing the qualifications of the CRP vocational services Program

Director. Consumer program participation increased as a result of these initiatives.

Coordination and Collaboration

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

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

Current Goals

This foundation has guided the Bureau as it lays the framework for coordination of an ongoing employment services system with the federal supported employment services program. As documented in Attachment 4.11(e)(2), the Bureau has actively sought to increase the number of consumers who are able to access a menu of ongoing employment services. The Bureau and its supported employment providers around the state are developing cooperative agreements, partnerships and models of employment services and supports for the diverse consumer population in Connecticut. The broad range of services and supports that are becoming available in different venues gives the state partners flexibility in administering programs and utilization of blended funding sources.

The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 Supported Employment definition emphasizes "competitive work in an integrated employment setting for persons with the most severe disabilities for whom competitive employment has not

traditionally occurred or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability and who, because of the severity of the disability, need intensive support services or extended services in order to perform such work, inclusive of transitional employment for persons with the most severe disabilities due to mental illness.”

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

Transition to Extended Services

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

Future Plans

As BRS continues to utilize federal supported employment funding and other ongoing employment supports, a long-term employment tracking system is planned and will be in place when the new VR case management system is in operation in FFY 2010. As these supportive employment programs help to increase access to and retention of employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, the state will be able to report on long-range successful employment outcomes for vocational rehabilitation consumers.

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