

# **Overview for Draft 2014 State Plan**

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) will submit a new State Plan to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) regarding the provision of vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs in Connecticut for federal fiscal year 2014.

We are seeking input from you to help inform the State Plan. Themes shared at the Public Meetings April 8 & 9, 2013 and themes shared during the written comment period will help us finalize the State Plan. The following segments of the State Plan are provided for your review and comment:

4.2(c) – Input of the State Rehabilitation Council

4.10 – CSPD-Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

4.11 (b) Annual Estimates

4.11(c)(1) – Goals & Priorities

4.11(c)(4) – Supported Employment

4.11(d) – Strategies

4.11(e)(2) – Report of Progress

## **Attachment 4.2(c) Input of State Rehabilitation Council**

Required annually by all agencies except those agencies that are independent consumer-controlled commissions.

Identify the Input provided by the state rehabilitation council, including recommendations from the council's annual report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other council reports. Be sure to also include:

- the Designated state unit's response to the input and recommendations; and
- explanations for the designated state unit's rejection of any input or recommendation of the council.

### **SRC Participation**

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) maintains an ongoing collaboration with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). The SRC is comprised of volunteers, most of whom are current or former vocational rehabilitation (VR) consumers or family members of VR consumers. They are appointed by the Governor to review and assess the effectiveness and delivery of vocational rehabilitation services provided for individuals with disabilities who are seeking employment. The SRC has participated in the following endeavors:

1. BRS Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA);
2. BRS 2014 State Plan;
3. BRS 2013 Public Meetings;
4. BRS Transition Committee;
5. Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 Conference;
6. National Council of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) Conferences (two) and Teleconferences (six);
7. SRC Meetings (six per year);
8. Review of Administrative Hearing Outcomes (1); and
9. Rehabilitation Services Administration 2013 Monitoring Conference Call.

### **Agency Changes**

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) continues to evolve as new staff is hired to assume responsibilities that will encompass the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind, the Bureau of Organizational Support which includes the Sign Language Interpreting Unit, the Driver Training Program for Persons with Disabilities, and the Worker's Rehabilitation Program. Although Amy Porter was named Commissioner of DORS, she remains vigilant as she simultaneously serves as Acting Director for the vocational rehabilitation program. SRC members have monitored the transition to ensure that the needs of VR consumers remain a priority as the new agency continues to develop.

### **Expanded Services**

BRS has a nearly full staff of counselors eager to assist consumers in finding or keeping jobs. BRS has provided in-house training to support their knowledge of the vocational rehabilitation program in Connecticut and the resources available to meet consumer needs.

BRS lifted the Order Of Selection (OOS) October 1, 2012 to serve all consumers with disabilities, not just those with a most significant or significant disability (Priority 1 and Priority 2). This OOS had been in effect since 1991. BRS will assess its ability to maintain this level of service.

### **BRS 2013 Public Meeting**

BRS and the SRC will host two public meetings in April 2013 in Bridgeport and Hartford. Consumers, their families, and others interested in the VR program are invited to review the draft of the 2014 State Plan and to share their comments regarding this draft at the public meetings. More than 5,000 consumers received invitations via mail to attend the public meetings. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) partners were notified electronically from the distribution of our flyer and the posting on the BRS website.

Representatives of the SRC will attend the public meetings to assess the effectiveness of the VR program by listening to consumer comments and questions. Top-ranking staff, led by Amy Porter, BRS Acting Director, will present an overview of the State Plan, highlighting the goals for the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program, and answer general questions about the VR program. They will respond to questions in a group setting.

Evaluations of the public meetings will be distributed to enable attendees to share feedback on the process and to make suggestions for improvements.

In addition to providing comments at the public meetings, anyone who cannot attend, but wants to share a comment or ask a question could send it by mail, e-mail, or fax. This period for written communication beyond the dates of the public meetings allows someone who is unable to attend the public meeting, to still to submit their comments. Written comments will be acknowledged and those that contain- issues will be passed on to District Directors for follow-up, as needed.

### **SRC Recommendations to BRS for State Plan 2014**

As a result of the SRC office surveys last year and the formal submission of the final report to the VR Acting Director this year for review, assessment and action, the first four recommendations are being resubmitted again this year; two additional recommendations have been added:

#### **Recommendation 1 –**

Signage to locate the building and directions to access the BRS office needs improvement in these offices:

- Danbury, Enfield, Hartford, Middletown, Norwich, Torrington, and Waterbury.

As DORS continues to evolve and new signs are developed, we hope that signs and directions to the VR office locations will be highly visible to all visitors in all offices.

#### **Recommendation 2 –**

The following offices need more accessible parking:

- Danbury, Hartford, Stamford, and Waterbury.

#### **Recommendation 3 –**

Availability of BRS staff to greet consumers upon arrival needs to be addressed in the following locations:

- Danbury, Danielson, Hartford, and Torrington.

**Recommendation 4 –**

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

**Recommendation 5 –**

We continue to support you in your efforts to secure adequate office space for the Enfield, Middletown and Willimantic offices. We would like to see a more aggressive approach to providing VR services to consumers who reside in these areas.

**Recommendation 6 –**

The SRC recommends additional staff training specific to mental health/psychiatric disabilities including trauma-related issues (and substance abuse, in addition to the one already in place), with the goal of increasing education and sensitivity in staff and counselors working with these disabilities groups from the point of entry into a BRS office all the way through to a closed case.

This screen was last updated on April 4, 2013 10:48AM by Evelyn Knight

## **Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development**

### **Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development**

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

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

#### **Data System on Personnel**

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

As of March 2013, 146 active positions were filled. The number and type of BRS positions are identified in the personnel chart further down in this attachment.

The bureau currently has 80 of 81 vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor positions filled. Nine serve specialty caseloads:

- one counselor prioritizes consumers with mental health diagnoses;
- one counselor prioritizes transition caseloads;
- six counselors prioritize individuals that are Deaf; and
- one counselor prioritizes Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients with disabilities.

All BRS field staff is given the supervision necessary to ensure that the position provides the level of direct services deemed necessary. Supervisors meet with their staff annually to address development needs for the upcoming year. Strategies for building the skills of all staff are included in Individual Staff Development Plans. The In-Service grant provides BRS with the resources to provide the training needed for the agency's goals and priorities while it supports individual staff development needs.

#### **Annual Information on Staff and Consumer Ratios**

The bureau served 8,930 consumers in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2012. With 80 VR counselors, the ratio of VR counselors to all consumers is 1:112; the ratio of VR supervisors to consumers is 1:992. The ratio of all staff to consumers is 1:61. Of the 8,930 total annual consumers, 2,437 developed an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The ratio of staff to consumers who developed an IPE is different: 80 VR counselors to all consumers with an IPE is 1:30; VR supervisors to consumers with an IPE is 1:271; and all staff to consumers with an IPE is 1:17.

**Current Need for Staff**

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

**Qualified Personnel Needs - Five Year Projections**

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

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

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

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

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Administrative/Fiscal/Secretarial Support Staff	35	1	6
2	Central Office Consultants	11	1	2
3	Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC)	6	0	1
4	District Directors	3	0	1
5	Managers	3	1	1

6	Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisors	9	0	2
7	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors	81	1	24
8		0	0	0
9		0	0	0
10		0	0	0

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

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

### Personnel Development

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

The following identifies the CORE (Council on Rehabilitation Education) accredited institution of higher education in the state that is preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals. All rehabilitation counseling graduates from this college will be eligible to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) exam.

Row	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
1	Central Connecticut State University	95	2	4	17
2		0	0	0	0
3		0	0	0	0
4		0	0	0	0

5		0	0	0	0
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## Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

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

### Recruitment

The bureau sends announcements for Counselor positions to all CORE-accredited institutions of higher education that train VR Counselors in the United States. We have initiated contacts with all CORE-accredited universities so that we can continue to find well-qualified staff for the vacancies we anticipate in the future. In addition to the Connecticut-based CORE institution listed above, we are in close contact with the regional institutions from which we have traditionally found Counselor applicants (Assumption and Springfield Colleges in MA, and Salve Regina in RI); we have staff that serve on advisory boards or teach at these institutions.

The bureau is pleased to report that we have successfully recruited a qualified staff representative of the population of Connecticut: the 32% diversity of our staff exceeds the 25% diversity of our state. We are also pleased to have recruited 8% of our staff from individuals that have disabilities. Our primary challenge has been finding Master's level counselors who are proficient with Spanish or American Sign Language (ASL). We will continue the following steps to ensure there is a sufficient pool of qualified counselors for future openings:

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

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

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

In those instances when the bureau hires a counselor with a related Bachelor's degree as previously defined, a 48-credit Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling will be required. These counselors must apply to a planned program at an approved graduate school within six months of the hire date and complete their master's degree within four years of the first eligible semester of classes. The bureau will require the colleges or universities to be CORE-accredited or to be in the process of achieving accreditation.

## **Personnel Standards**

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

1. standards that are consistent with any national or state-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services; and
2. to the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the State Plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, institutions of higher education, and other public agencies of these steps and the timelines for taking each step.

Be sure to include the following:

- specific strategies for retraining, recruiting, and hiring personnel;
- the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards;
- procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period;
- the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards;
- the identification of a plan for training newly hired personnel who do not meet the established standards to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

### **Personnel Standards for the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)**

The current requirements for CSPD are based on the national standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. The bureau was successful in changing the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services job description for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to match our current criteria. The bureau hires counselors that meet the following:

1. Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling from a CORE-accredited institution; or
2. Master's and current Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certification; or

3. Master's in a related field which had a Theories and Techniques of Counseling course as part of the required curriculum; or
4. Master's, Specialist, or Doctoral degree in one of 13 qualifying majors (as specified by CRCC) granted from a college or university accredited by a recognized regional accrediting body at the time the degree was conferred.

The bureau will pay for and require the following graduate courses for new counselors in permanent positions with a Master's in a related field as described in 3 or 4 above. The number of additional required courses will depend on the previous education of the new employee as well as total months of vocational rehabilitation counseling experience. The bureau's definition of education, course curriculum, and experience is based on current standards for the national Certified Rehabilitation Counselor certification:

- 60 months of vocational counseling experience accepted by the credentialing committee - no additional courses are required. CSPD requirements are met.

- 48 months of vocational counseling experience accepted by the credentialing committee - two of the following four additional courses are required to meet CSPD requirements:

- o Assessment;
- o Occupational Information or Job Placement;
- o Medical or Psychosocial Aspects of Disabilities; or
- o Community Resources or Delivery of Rehabilitation Services.

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

- o Theories and Techniques of Counseling;
- o Foundations of Rehabilitation Counseling;
- o Assessment;
- o Occupational Information or Job Placement;
- o Medical or Psychosocial Aspects of Disabilities; and/or
- o Community Resources or Delivery of Rehabilitation Services.

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

BRS employees interested in CRC certification are encouraged to contact the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification at the following website: <http://www.crccertification.com/> for more specific information on their credentials and experience. The bureau does not guarantee that the above criteria will entitle a counselor to sit for the CRC exam. The bureau provides training at no cost, and offers Continuing Education Units (CEU's), which will count toward the ongoing training requirements by CRC as well as the National Board for Certified Counselor (NBCC), Connecticut's Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), and Certified Vocational Evaluator (CVE).

### **Current Data on Achievement of CSPD Standards and Staff Certifications**

The bureau currently has 90 staff positions required to meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Standards; 81 counselors and nine supervisors. As of this writing, one counselor position is vacant; no supervisor position is vacant.

All staff in these categories meet the CSPD requirements, with the exception of those that are newly hired or in the midst of their Master's program. Newly hired counselors who do not meet the CSPD standard are allowed three years to complete CSPD courses. Nine counselors are taking one to six courses to meet the Connecticut standard for CSPD. Counselors hired at the Bachelor's level are allowed four years to complete a CORE-accredited rehabilitation Master's degree. There are currently two counselors in this category.

In addition to education requirements, BRS encourages staff to pursue certification in their field. The bureau is especially pleased with the number of staff holding certifications since staff fund the cost of the certification exams and yearly fees themselves.

Currently the bureau has 32 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, 13 Connecticut Licensed Professional Counselors, four National Board of Certified Counselors, six Certified Work Incentive and Assistance Programs (WIPA) Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC) and five Certified Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) or National Certified Interpreters. We also have one Consultant who is an Assistive Technology Professional (ATP).

The bureau embraces the CSPD process to ensure continuous organizational development, continuous improvement of the competencies of all staff, especially (VR) Counselors and supervisors.

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

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

## **Staff Development**

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

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

## **Preparation/Staff Development**

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

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

- Public Meetings (2013);
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment results;
- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) 107 Review;
- Key training personnel collaboration with TACE (Technical Assistance and Continuing Education), Region 1 staff;
- Management reports; and
- Manager, district director, consultant, and supervisor feedback.

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

methods are utilized to assure that training activities are diverse enough to address individual learning styles.

### **Retention of Qualified Staff**

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

- BRS recruits staff that is committed to the importance of VR work;
- In-service training is available to staff at all levels;
- Salaries are high, benefits are good and most staff have a thirty-five hour workweek; some choose to work four days a week;
- Staff may give input into decisions that affect the way they work;
- Staff was deeply involved in helping to plan adjustment to the new case management system that included train-the-trainer sessions, testing and evaluations, and problem solving of System 7; and
- Staff can participate in ongoing committees: Staff Training, Regional Training, Community Rehabilitation Providers, Transition, Autism Spectrum, and the BRS Annual Meeting.

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

In 2008, BRS re-engaged in a process to create Individual Staff Development Plans (ISDP) with all employees. The bureau has continued with its plan for each staff person to be given an opportunity to create an ISDP. The plans identify areas of an employee's current job that need further development, areas that could be developed to prepare for a future job in the agency, and training needed for either. This plan encourages staff to pursue areas of their strength and interest. In addition, the encouragement of staff development for areas in which they may work someday will build bench strength, which is an important component of the bureau's plan for succession.

### **Performance System for Measuring Counselor Performance**

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

### **Succession Planning**

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

### **Leadership and Capacity Building**

In addition to the Individual Staff Development Plans, committee participation involving leadership opportunities, and ongoing participation in updates for the state plan, the bureau has planned the following activities for supervisors and other staff:

- Co-facilitate training with a central office consultant;
- Make presentations to their regional staff meetings about training they have attended; and
- Participate in various committees where members assume leadership roles for training, policy development, and communication with other staff.

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

### **Assistive Technology – Resources and Training for Staff**

BRS helped create and is a member of the NEAT (New England Assistive Technology) Center at Oak Hill. The Center is the largest assistive technology (AT) center in Connecticut where one can try AT devices for personal use, observe AT device demonstrations, donate or purchase used equipment that is refurbished and recycled, obtain loans of AT devices and receive training on the latest adaptive equipment.

The Connecticut Tech Act Project director provides training and consultation for bureau staff. Other in-service trainings on specific disability populations contain information on technological solutions for consumers.

### **Training Based on our In-Service Training Project**

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

- Goal I: To improve the skills of all bureau staff by providing training and development in vocational rehabilitation service provision, responsiveness to consumers, bureau mission and programs, and awareness of state and community resources; and
- 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 Department of Social Services (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 who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- Braille, large print, or oral format, as needed, for persons with visual impairments;
- an architecturally accessible training site; and
- personal care assistants for those requiring this service.

### **Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs**

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

#### **Communication with Diverse Populations**

The bureau addresses individual communication needs of applicants for and recipients of services through the services of others able to communicate in alternate languages, appropriate modes, or in native languages. Approximately 10% of the current staff is bilingual in English and Spanish. The bureau employs staff who speak other languages as well as staff who use both American Sign Language (ASL) and English. The bureau publishes on its website all the languages its staff speaks, by district. The list below indicates the languages spoken by current staff and the regions in which they work:

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

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

Each district has Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) on staff to work with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. These counselors are equipped with newly installed video phones. The bureau hires full-time Interpreter Assistants for its RCDs who are in need of this accommodation. The bureau also contracts interpreter services through the Connecticut Commission on the Deaf and Hearing-Impaired and Family Services Woodfield.

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

## **Coordination of Personnel Development Under the individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act**

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

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

The bureau co-funds an Education Consultant position with the Connecticut State Department of Education's Division of Special Education and Pupil Services who has been active in the Department of Education's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Council. The bureau's Coordinator of Staff Development routinely plans training with input from the Consultant in the co-funded position. This Consultant provides annual training for all bureau professional staff on Transition and other provisions of the IDEA. The Consultant also meets with the management team of the bureau semi-annually to review current collaborative training and other provisions of the IDEA. This collaboration allows for coordination of the bureau's human resource plan and personnel development under the IDEA.

## **Attachment 4.11(b) Annual Estimates**

- Identify the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services.
- Identify the number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds under:
  - Part B of Title I;
  - Part B of Title VI;
  - Each priority category, if under an order of selection.
- Identify the cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

### **Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Costs of Services**

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

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

These statistics indicate a considerable number of individuals who are not currently working plus a sizeable number of the transition-age individuals may be eligible for VR services. In addition, an unknown number of the 24% who are working may be under employed. Persons with disabilities who are already employed may also require services to attain employment consistent with their unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice.

These points make it difficult, if not impossible, to accurately estimate the number of potentially eligible consumers of VR services. That number is many times more than BRS has historically served or has the resources to serve.

### **State Estimate of the Number of Individuals to be Served Under this Plan**

For Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2012, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS or the Bureau) projects that it will serve 4,769 eligible consumers in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act. This is a 3.4% increase from FFY 2011, when 4,611 individuals received services under an IPE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Costs of Services**

Title I purchase of services (POS) costs for Priority #1 and Priority #2 consumers in FFY 2012 is projected to be approximately \$11.9 million. In addition to a traditional POS expenditure of \$10 million, the Bureau has and will continue to utilize available funding to initiate alternative client service-oriented projects that promise to pay significant dividends to our consumers throughout FFY 2012 and beyond. Over the course of FFY 2012, the Bureau intends to invest \$1 million in serving significant numbers of consumers by funding their participation in Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs, Summer Youth Employment Programs and Employer Outreach and Hiring events designed to serve groups of consumers. In addition to these projected expenditures, BRS continues to participate in and fund an interagency agreement with the State Department of Education to expand outreach and the availability of services to transition-aged consumers in secondary schools. The bureau will invest approximately \$870,000 on this project over the course of FFY 2012.

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

projection of \$12 million for Title I funding. Please note that total expenditures may increase upon targeted expansion of the projects mentioned above.

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

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

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

**Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for  
Fiscal Year 2012(submitted FY 2011)**

**Attachment 4.11(c)(1)Goals and Priorities**

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

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

**Goals and Priorities**

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

Each of the goal areas contains a set of priority areas that the bureau could address in the coming year. We cannot address every issue identified as a need, but attempted to build goals broad enough to address the major

themes. Priority areas were chosen based on their frequency of occurrence in the assessment.

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

*Priority areas:*

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

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

*Priority areas:*

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

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

*Priority areas:*

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

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

*Priority areas:*

- Businesses
- Community Rehabilitation Providers
- State agencies

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

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

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

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

- Are individuals with the most significant disabilities and who have previously been unable to maintain competitive employment due to the severity of their disabilities;
- Are in need of ongoing support for the duration of their employment; and
- Will have extended support services available beyond BRS time-limited services.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for  
Fiscal Year 2012(submitted FY 2011)**

**Attachment 4.11(d) Strategies to Achieve the Goals and Priorities**

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.
  - Measure: rehabilitation rate (standards and indicators 1.2)
  - Measure: consumer wage comparison to state averages (standards and indicators 1.5)
  - 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
  - Measure: # of website hits
- Strategy: Develop materials and post on the Connect-Ability website
  - 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
  - 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
  - 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.
  - 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
  - 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
  - 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
  - Measure: # of employment outcomes for individuals referred prior to age 24, as compared to previous year

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

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

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

- Strategy: Review recommendations from the Autism Task Force
  - Measure: Appropriate recommendations are implemented
- Strategy: Utilize the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Committee
  - 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.
  - 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
  - Measure: # of video phones available, usage
- Strategy: Continue the rate differential for Community Rehabilitation Providers who make their services accessible to individuals whose primary language is ASL
  - 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.
  - Measure: ability to produce all forms in Spanish.
- Strategy: Continue the rate differential for Community Rehabilitation Providers who make their services accessible to individuals whose primary language is Spanish
  - Measure: utilization of the rate differential
- Strategy: Make the BRS website information available in Spanish
  - 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.
  - 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
  - Measure: # of days between 00 and 02

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

*Priority areas:*

- Businesses
- Community Rehabilitation Providers
- State agencies

Objective 4.1: Create partnerships with Businesses.

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

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

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

Objective 4.3: Partner with state agencies.

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

## 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 2011 Attachment 4.11(c)(1), including an evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals were achieved.

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

The Bureau of Rehabilitation (BRS) has developed a set of strategies designed to address the goals and priorities identified in section 4.11 (c)(1) of this plan. BRS used these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the vocational rehabilitation and the supported employment programs.

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

##### *Priority areas:*

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

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

- Strategy: continue to use a performance evaluation model that incorporates selected standards and indicators into annual service ratings of employees. Standards and Indicators are based on activity in **FFY 2012**.

- o Measure: rehabilitation rate (standards and indicators 1.2) -

§ Indicator 1.2 – Of cases closed after services, percent of employment outcomes: ( $\geq 55.8\%$ ). The bureau had a rehabilitation rate of 60.4%. Therefore, we passed this Indicator for FFY 2012.

- o Measure: consumer wage comparison to state averages (standards and indicators 1.5) -

§ Indicator 1.5 – Earnings ratio – hourly wage competitive employment to hourly wage of all employed in state ( $\geq .52$ ). The bureau had an average earnings ratio of .63 when compared to the state average earnings. Therefore, we passed this Indicator for FFY 2012.

- o Measure: primary source of support (standards and indicators 1.6) -

§ Indicator 1.6 – Self-support at closure VS self-support at application ( $\geq 53$ ) 45.2%. The bureau failed this Indicator as 45.2% of our successful outcomes went from not self-supporting to self-supporting at closure for FFY 2012.

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

- Strategy: Develop materials and post on the BRS website.

- o Measure: Number of website hits -

§ The BRS Website is constantly updated with information about the vocational rehabilitation program and announcements about disability-related opportunities. Visitors to the site may learn how to apply for services, find transition information, read publications and the BRS Policy Manual, learn about hiring a personal care assistant or about targeted projects within the employment division, and may track the activities of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) while learning how to become a member. We also have links to Connect-Ability, the Tech Act Project, Ticket to Work, the Department of Rehabilitation Services and the Department of Social Services. We also post updates from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). There were 154,757 page views to the BRS site for FFY 2012.

- Strategy: Develop materials and post on the Connect-Ability website.
- o Measure: Number of website hits and amount of marketing materials disseminated.

§ Connect-Ability continued with its marketing campaign, that included the creation of new Walgreens video designed to highlight the bureau's creative hiring options for employers. A Walgreens print ad was also created and a compilation of TV ads ran throughout FFY 2012. Connect-Ability produced six success story brochures for Employment Consultants to promote a diverse workforce for businesses. In addition employment related marketing materials were produced and reside on the website. Connect-Ability responded to over 300 calls for technical assistance and had 25,000 unique visitors to its website: [www.connect-ability](http://www.connect-ability).

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-

§ The bureau was awarded two five-year, in-service training grants covering October 1, 2010 –

September 30, 2015. The Bureau has developed an integrated program of training, education, and development activities for staff to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences to improve the quality of services and the number and quality of employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Our training project enhances counselor knowledge of current VR practices and BRS policy. In-service training is available to all staff.

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

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

1. Goal I: To improve the skills of all Bureau staff by providing training and development in vocational rehabilitation service provision, responsiveness to consumers, Bureau mission and programs, awareness of state and community resources.

2. Goal II: To improve recruitment and retention of Bureau staff by providing career development and succession planning activities to assist counselors in defining appropriate career paths and to assist the Bureau to maximize its resources, while continuing to meet CSPD requirements.

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

o **Connect-Ability** created an online training platform in partnership with the **Bureau of Rehabilitation Services** and the **Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**. The purpose of the online training platform, called the Distance Learning Initiative, is to provide online training for individuals with disabilities, family members, educators, employers, and anyone else who is interested in taking the training modules. A variety of training modules are available on topics such as assistive technology, personal care assistance, work readiness, disability etiquette, Disability in the Workplace. There are also specific training modules geared to vocational rehabilitation counselors and community rehabilitation providers on specific vocational rehabilitation services. The training modules are available for free by signing up for an account at [www.connect-ability.com/e-learning](http://www.connect-ability.com/e-learning).

There are currently 42 online training modules and a total of 760 registered users of which 298 registered as of October 1, 2012.

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 -

§ System 7 is incorporated as needed in core in-service training for new hires. System update memos provide guidance for new function and review for all users. More formal training remains under consideration following current focus on tightening business rules which directly affect system settings and related training.

**Objective 1.5: To provide training and support for consumers who receive funding for Personal Assistance Services (PAS) as part of their IPE.**

Strategy: Contract with Allied Community Resources to provide fiduciary services and training to BRS consumers who receive funding for personal assistance.

Measure: Number of all consumers who receive funding for PAS will be registered as household employers both federally and locally, and both the consumer/employer and their personal assistance providers will be paying applicable state and federal taxes.

Historically, BRS has advised consumers who receive funding for personal assistance that both the consumer/employer and their personal assistants are responsible for paying all applicable taxes. It came to BRS's attention that not all consumers/employers were doing this. Most of these consumers/employers will become eligible for Connecticut's Medicaid PCA waiver and will need to become registered employers and learn to work with a fiduciary. Consumers who do not use the Medicaid PCA waiver also need this information as an employer.

This contract allows BRS to provide this service and assure that all applicable state and federal requirements are being met. Additionally, consumers are provided with support to become registered employers and learn a skill they will need to maximize their independence at work and in the community.

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

*Priority areas:*

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

Objective 2.1: To increase overall employment outcomes.

- Strategy: continue to use a performance evaluation model that incorporates selected standards and indicators into annual service ratings of employees.

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

§ Indicator 1.1 - Change in employment outcome from previous year: ( $\geq 1,171$ ) 1237. The bureau closed a total 1,237 cases with successful outcomes in FY 2012. This was 66 more cases with successful rehabilitation outcomes than the prior year. Therefore, we passed this indicator for 2012.

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 -

§ Measure: Rehabilitation rate for Latino Consumers for FFY 2011: 48.9% compared to the Rehabilitation Rate for Latino Consumers for FFY 2010: 65.2%. Staff will continue to work on solutions that will raise this rate.

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

- Strategy: cross-training on new Learning Disability (LD) guidelines and transition toolkit.

- Strategy: Partner with State Department of Education, The State Education Resource Center (SERC), the six Regional Education Service Centers (RESC) 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 -

§ Last year, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) selected the Graduation Rate indicator along with closing the achievement gap for Latino and African-American students with

disabilities as a priority for CSDE's November 2011 Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) site visit. These priorities are the focus of all professional development and technical assistance activities for the 2012-13 academic year. Approximately 50 public and private agency personnel, community providers, parents and families participated in the planning.

§ The CSDE VR Consultant worked with the BRS Transition Committee to revise training for BRS counselors on the identification of transition-age students with learning disabilities to incorporate the new CT guidelines as specified in IDEA 2004 and the revised Guidelines for the Identification of Students with Learning Disabilities (2010). Trained the BRS Transition Committee with support from BRS central office, CSDE and a neuropsychologist to provide district professional development and technical assistance to regional personnel through two trainings in each of the three districts.

§ The CSDE and the State Education Resource Center (SERC) use the **74-piece Transition Toolkit** as part of their training with school districts. This toolkit, available on the BRS Website at <http://www.ct.gov/brs> (School to Work), helps staff, consumers and their families, and stakeholders with transition planning. The SDE and SERC have also added the Connect-Ability website and the Connect-Ability Distance Learning Initiative e-Learning module to their "Making the IEP a Living Document" training for school districts.

§ Measure: For FFY 2011, 21.5% of employment outcomes were individuals referred prior to age 24. For FFY 2010, 17.1% of employment outcomes were individuals referred prior to age 24.

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

- Strategy: partner with Local Mental Health Authorities and state Mental Health agency.

- o Measure: Number of employment outcomes, as compared to previous year -

§ Measure: Out of 1,171 successful employment outcomes for FFY 2011, 342 or 29% of the consumers received services due to a primary and/or a secondary psychiatric disability. Compared to FFY 2010, 24% (225 out of 922 successful closures) of the consumers received services due to a primary and/or a secondary psychiatric disability.

- o Measure: Amount of earnings of individuals in competitive employment, as compared to previous year -

§ Measure: For FFY 2011, of those successfully closed consumers in competitive employment who received services due to a primary and/or secondary psychiatric disability, the average monthly earnings at closure were \$1,296.85 per month (average annual salary of \$15,562.16). Compared to FFY 2010, the average monthly earnings at closure for the 24% of those consumers who received services due to having a psychiatric disability were \$1,259.03 (average annual income of \$15,108.36).

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

- Strategy: Utilize the services of the ASD specialist psychologist on contract to review cases of consumers with ASD..

- o Measure: -Psychologist met with agency and CRP staff regarding three consumers this year.

- Strategy: Utilize the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Committee.

- o Measure: Number of consumers and families participating in the Committee -
- § The Committee met with 25 families/individuals and, in addition, conducted about 15 case conferences.

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

*Priority areas:*

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

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

- Strategy: Make consumer-use workstations available in all offices.
- o Measure: Number of people using consumer-use workstations -
- § Seven workstations have been installed across the state. BRS will continue to pursue the installation of additional computers for consumer use where space is available.

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

- Strategy: Make video phones available in all BRS offices.
- o Measure: Number of video phones available, usage -
- § BRS currently has eight Video Phones for Deaf Professionals or Professionals working with Deaf consumers in district offices; one additional phone will be installed in East Hartford.
- § BRS also has 11 public Video Phones for consumers to use located in the Danbury, Danielson, Hartford, Manchester, Middletown, New Britain, New Haven, Norwich, Stamford, Torrington, and Waterbury offices; and Bridgeport's public videophone is scheduled to be installed in April.
- Strategy: Continue to work with Community Rehabilitation Providers on making their services accessible to individuals whose primary language is ASL.
- o Measure: Utilization of the rate differential for Community Rehabilitation Providers through June 30, 2013.

Since establishing the Communications Rate Differential pilot in July of 2010, the number of CRP staff fluent in American Sign Language has expanded from four CRPs to nine CRPs and from six evaluators and/or job coaches to 23 evaluators and/or job coaches who meet our criteria for the differential to work with Deaf consumers who use ASL as their primary language.

- o Measure: Active participation by both BRS and CRPs in the BRS and CEP Communication Task Force established to assist CRPs with improving access to their services for individuals whose primary language is ASL. -
- § Since establishing the BRS and CRP Communication Task Force, BRS has provided a Deaf and Latino Job Developers and Sensitivity Workshop in which 35 CRP employment specialists have attended. A

CRP Communication List Serve was also established for CRP Employments Specialists to post questions regarding working with Deaf consumers; BRS staff provides answers and feedback to these postings.

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

- Strategy: Translate forms into Spanish.

- o Measure: ability to produce all forms in Spanish -

§ Staff access Spanish forms as needed using Microsoft Word files. Additional publications may be translated into Spanish using a Spanish translation vendor.

- Strategy: Continue to work with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) on making their services accessible to individuals whose primary language is Spanish.

- o Measure: Utilization of the rate differential for Community Rehabilitation Providers through June 30, 2013.

As a result of this pilot which started in 2010, the number of CRP staff fluent in Spanish has expanded from one CRP to eight CRPs and from one evaluator and/or job coach to 17 evaluators and/or job coaches who meet our criteria for the differential to work with monolingual Spanish-speaking consumers.

- o Measure: Active participation by both BRS and CRPs in the BRS and CEP Communication Task Force established to assist CRPs with improving access to their services for individuals whose primary language is Spanish. -

Since establishing the BRS and CRP Communication Task Force, BRS has provided a Deaf and Latino Job Developers and Sensitivity Workshop in which 35 CRP employment specialists have attended. A CRP Communication List Serve was also established for CRP Employments Specialists to post questions regarding working with Deaf consumers; BRS staff provides answers and feedback to these postings.

- Strategy: Make the BRS website information available in Spanish

- o Measure: Number of hits to the Spanish forms within the website

§ There are no Spanish forms on the BRS Website. However, the Consumer Handbook and the Job Seeker Brochure are available in Spanish.

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

- Strategy: Partner with Connect-Ability staff to identify transportation resources and develop regional expertise.

- o Measure: Number of counselors identified as transportation experts and new transportation resources in the state.

§ One transportation expert has been identified in each region for a total of three in the state. BRS supported the following new transportation resources: implementation of Taxi Voucher Programs in Hartford and New Haven; the purchase of four wheelchair-accessible taxis; and the implementation of the state-wide ADA Para-transit standardization project.

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

- Strategy: re-introduce status 00 to develop baseline measure.

- o Measure: Number of days between 00 and 02 -

§ The limitations of System 7 do not currently allow the number of days between 00 and 02 to be tracked.

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

*Priority areas:*

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

Objective 4.1: Create partnerships with Businesses.

- Strategy: Increase the use of On-the-Job Trainings (OJTs).

- o Measure: Number of OJTs negotiated -

§ October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012 = 174 OJTs negotiated (previous year 155 OJTs). Represents an increase of approximately 11% of successfully negotiated employer agreements.

- Strategy: Implement Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs.

- o Measure: Number of awards -

§ Five awards granted to:

- Quinnebaug Valley ARC / Lowes Distribution Center
- Community Enterprises / Mohegan Sun
- Community Enterprises / Walgreens Retail Stores
- Community Enterprises / Homegoods Distribution Center
- Kennedy Center / CVS Retail

- o Measure: Number of placements -

§ The grants were awarded starting in June 2011. Preparations began with some classes starting before September 2011. As of September 2012, there have been 202 consumers who completed one of the training programs. To date, 123 consumers have been hired as a result of the training.

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: Continue to work with Community Rehabilitation Providers on making their services accessible to individuals whose primary language is American Sign Language (ASL) or Spanish.

o Measure: Utilization of the rate differential for Community Rehabilitation Providers through June 30, 2013.

Since establishing the Communications Rate Differential Pilot in July of 2010, the number of CRP staff fluent in American Sign Language has expanded from four CRPs to nine CRPs and from six evaluators and/or job coaches to 23 evaluators and/or job coaches who meet our criteria for the differential to work with Deaf consumers who use ASL as their primary language.

Under this pilot, the number of CRP staffs in Spanish has also expanded from 1 CRP to eight CRPs and from one evaluator and/or job coach to 17 evaluators and/or job coaches who meet our criteria for the differential to work with monolingual Spanish-speaking consumers.

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

§ As described earlier, the BRS and CRP Communication Task Force was established this past year to replace the CRP Differential Pilot. The goal of the Task Force is to assist CRPs with improving access to their services for individuals whose primary language is ASL and Spanish.

§

Since establishing the BRS and CRP Communication Task Force, BRS has provided a Deaf and Latino Job Developers and Sensitivity Workshop in which 35 CRP employment specialists have attended. A CRP Communication List Serve was also established for CRP Employments Specialists to post questions regarding working with Deaf consumers; BRS staff provides answers and feedback to these postings.

Objective 4.3: Partner with state agencies.

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

o Measure: MOA deliverables

§ Implement capacity-development plans to create sustainable infrastructure change that supports employment of individuals with disabilities in the following state agencies:

o **Department of Developmental Services (DDS)**

Assist Connecticut's DDS in taking a leadership role to improve employment services for individuals with developmental disabilities.

DDS, CSDE and BRS initiated a statewide Pilot Project with 10 individuals with intellectual disabilities who have been identified by DDS as qualifying for their services upon exiting high school in June 2013. BRS agreed to begin working with these students in their next to last year of high school to establish eligibility, develop an employment plan and support paid employment in a competitive setting in summer 2012. The local school districts agreed to collaborate with the student, family, DDS transition coordinator and BRS counselor and continue to support the student's employment during the 2012/2013 academic year. DDS agreed to provide long-term signoff for employment supports at the time the student is referred

to BRS and begin DDS funding when the student exits high school in June 2013 rather than at the time funding is confirmed by the legislature October 2013.

Regional teams continue to meet with these students, their families, BRS, the school district and DDS transition coordinators on a regular basis. The larger pilot team meets quarterly to review progress and provide ongoing support. The pilot team is also collecting data throughout this project to be reviewed and used in the development of best practices and potential pilot changes to determine the need for additional phases of this project.

To increase access to employment information for consumers with developmental disabilities DDS provided the following objectives during FFY 2012:

- Created DDS marketing materials to promote implementation of Employment First philosophy and principles.
- DDS self-advocate coordinators implementing Individual Plan (IP) buddies as part of their job.
- Finalized Employment Idol Video 3.
- Provided training and technical assistance to job developers.
- Provided benefits planning and financial literacy training sessions and benefits booklet for consumers, families, case managers and providers.
- Promoted 10 success stories of individuals who have achieved individualized and competitive employment.

#### o **Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)**

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

As a result of the Connect-Ability Employment Practices Improvement Collaborative (EPIC) project, DMHAS has provided the following:

- Supervisory training for all employment supervisors to build staff capacity and provide employment services.
- Developed on-line soft skills curriculum for youth.
- Developed life skills training that includes prevocational skills taught by employment staff, as well as other work-related skills.
- Recovery- Oriented Employment Services (ROES), developed on-line employability curriculum to increase job placement rate amount of DHMAS consumers.
- Developed specialized trainings and technical assistance on priority mental illness and addiction-related topics including the dynamics of addiction and psychiatric disorders.
- Developed ten train-the-trainer modules for organizations on topics related to the dynamics of addiction and psychiatric disorders.
- Offered Key Training in 15 different programs, representing five different location types that provide services to individuals with substance abuse, mental health issues, and/or criminal justice histories.
- A total of 49 consumers have received Work Keys National Employment Certification (NCRC).
- All of the final curricula and protocols, including all materials for the Connect-Ability website and/or designated web-site, will be delivered via distance learning.
- Produced marketing/educational/outreach for employers that were designed and implemented to inform Connecticut employers on the National Workforce Readiness Credential and its value to the Connecticut workforce.

#### o **State Department of Education (SDE)**

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

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

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

- Strategies to provide Assistive Technology services;
- Strategies to address equitable access to services;
- Strategies for improving community rehabilitation programs; and
- Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system assist individuals with disabilities.

#### **Strategies to provide Assistive Technology services:**

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

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

The Connecticut Tech Act Project continues to provide recycling through the website [www.getATstuff.com](http://www.getATstuff.com), where devices can be listed and obtained for free or for a lower cost. Currently, there are about 50 assistive technology devices listed for exchange on this website. Additionally, the

Connecticut Tech Act Project continues to engage followers with information on Assistive Technology devices and services through the Connecticut Tech Act Project page on Facebook.

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

- 62 devices have been loaned to BRS consumers;

§ 27 loans resulted in consumers deciding that the device was appropriate and either he or she purchased it, BRS purchased it, or the employer provided it to the consumer. The other devices were either not appropriate for the consumer or was not provided for other reasons.

Other Connecticut Tech Act Project (CTTAP) highlights for FY2012 include the following:

- 9 AT financial loans were approved, for a total of \$482,596; 4 loans were for hearing-related devices, one was for a mobility device, one was for environmental adaptations and four were for vehicle modifications.
- A total of 958 devices were recycled/refurbished
- A total of 309 devices were loaned to all CTTAP consumers
- Demonstrations of 405 devices were presented to a total of 542 individuals.
- Trainings and public awareness events generated attendance by 3,570 individuals;
- Publications including newsletters, brochures, and postcards and electronic media including the CTTAP Web and the CTTAP's page on Facebook reached approximately 431,170 individuals;
- The CTTAP Program Director continues to act in the role of Assistive Technology Consultant to VR counselors and consumers and to participate in the BRS Case Conferencing Team to provide guidance around AT needs for VR consumers.

## **Strategies to address equitable access to services**

While the Bureau had met the RSA minority indicator for the previous two years, we did not meet it for FFY 2012. We continue to monitor this indicator closely to improve continued performance to the standard. Local plans will address community issues. Statewide, the Bureau will employ the following strategies:

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

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

The bureau had a minority service rate that was .77 of the service rate for consumers from non-minority backgrounds. Therefore, we failed this Indicator in FFY 2012.

## **Strategies for improving Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP)**

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

In 2012-13, the Bureau updated the CRP contracts with a new section on quality assurance and fiscal accountability. New annual provider reviews will give the Bureau the ability to monitor performance measures and use a bench marking system in an overall review. The Bureau intends to identify those providers who need to develop corrective action plans to meet established benchmarks to increase the quality of purchased services.

In 2012-2013 the Bureau is developing a Distance Learning Module on CRP Services. Every CRP will have access to these learning modules for their new direct services staff. Additionally, BRS staff is conducting regional trainings on the BRS CRP service delivery system. All CRPs are expected and encouraged to attend these trainings.

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

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

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

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

### **Supported Employment Goals**

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

### **Supported Employment Strategies**

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

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

### **Impeding Factors for achieving goals and priorities**

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

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

3. Provide an Assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY 2011.

Of the Standards and Indicators not already listed above for FFY 2011, the outcomes were as follows:

Indicator 1.3 – Of consumers who achieved employment, percent w/competitive employment: ( $\geq 72.6\%$ ) 100%

The bureau had a competitive outcome rate of 100%. Therefore, we passed this Indicator for FFY 2012.

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

The bureau had a competitive outcome/significant disability rate of 100%. Therefore, we passed this Indicator for FFY 2012.

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

#### **Use of Title 1 Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities**

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

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

**Total funding for Innovation and Expansion \$191,385**

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

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

#### **State Independent Living Council (SILC)**

During fiscal year 2012, the State Independent Living Council (SILC) received \$180,000 in I & E funds to support the general operation of the Council. This included salaries for two full-time staff, office rent, supplies, copying and phone/fax/computer services, and SILC meeting expenses such as transportation, interpreter services, CART and other accessibility costs. In addition to the administration and operation of the federally mandated SILC, staff is responsible for developing, implementing, and evaluating the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). The I & E funds also supported SPIL Goal I of systems advocacy since the SILC staff implemented and coordinated much of this initiative. This then allowed most of the Title VII, Chapter 1, Part B monies to be used to support the remaining five goals and objectives of the 2011-2013 State Plan for Independent Living

The key SPIL activities and projects for FFY 2012 include:

- sponsored the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) at UCONN, during which 40 high school students with disabilities from throughout Connecticut attended a four-day training curriculum focused on enhancing community leadership skills;
- provided support toward the development of a comprehensive Very Special Arts (VSA) website (<http://ctvsa.org/>) that includes:
  - o a directory/register of Connecticut visual and performing artists with disabilities;
  - o an on-line gallery of visual art works by Connecticut artists with disabilities;
  - o a directory of Connecticut teaching artists who work with artists with disabilities;
  - o opportunities for artists with disabilities including professional development and mentoring;

- SILC led the accessible taxi initiative to include transportation hearings during which over 60 people testified or wrote testimony in support of this initiative. Connecticut now has over 140 accessible taxis in service;

- supported the creation of a fully accessible computer work station for consumer use at four of the Centers for Independent Living. These stations enable consumers who are blind or visually impaired and consumers with other significant physical disabilities the opportunity to become familiar with and access highly technical computers in the community;

- planned, funded and provided technical assistance to the five Centers for Independent Living (CILs) on a Youth Transition initiative and a Pre-Vocational initiative; and

- began a series of non-profit trainings for board and staff members of the five CILs which included topics such as succession planning, how to be a high-performance non-profit, how to build dynamic boards, and how to maximize the mission through creative collaboration.

### **State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)**

In 2012, the SRC collaborated with BRS on the public meetings and the next phase of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). Members of the SRC also attended the BRS Annual Meeting where they met with Lois McElravy, keynote speaker, brain injury survivor and member of the Montana Governor's Advisory Council for Vocational Rehabilitation. This meeting also gave them the opportunity to see the cohesiveness of the regions in the success they had in serving consumers. The SRC Chair participated in several national meetings and teleconferences. The SRC also contributed \$5,000 to the Youth Leadership Forum which included a scholarship to one of its graduating participants for the fifth year. See Attachment 4.2(c) for more information on the SRC.

This screen was last updated on April 5, 2013 8:50 AM by Evelyn Knight