



CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES (DORS)

## **BUREAU OF REHABILITATION SERVICES**

**State Plan for  
The Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and  
The Supported Employment Services Program  
Under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, As Amended**

**Effective Date: October 1, 2013**



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

## Connecticut Dept of Social Services - Bureau of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2014 (submitted FY 2013)

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### Preprint - Section 1: State Certifications

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

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

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

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)
--

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

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

1.7 The (enter title of state officer below)

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

Yes

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

Acting Director, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
--

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

Yes

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

Yes

State Plan Certified By

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

Signed?

Name of Signatory

Title of Signatory

Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy)

Assurances Certified By

At the request of RSA, the designated state agency and/or the designated state unit provide the following assurance(s), in addition to those contained within Section 2 through 8 below, in connection with the approval of the State Plan for FY 2014

Yes

Comments:

Signed?

Name of Signatory

Title of Signatory

Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy)

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

Section 1 Footnotes

- [1] Public Law 93 112, as amended by Public Laws 93 516, 95 602, 98 221, 99 506, 100-630, 102-569, 103-073, and 105-220.
- [2] Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.
- [3] All references in this plan to "designated state agency" or to "the state agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.
- [4] No funds under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved State Plan in accordance with Section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR part 361.
- [5] Applicable regulations include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85 and 86 and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program regulations in 34 CFR Part 361.
- [6] No funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the Title I State Plan in accordance with Section 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

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

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

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

- (a) Conduct of public meetings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(a) Designated state agency.

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

The designated state agency is:

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

or

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

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

(b) Designated state unit.

1. If the designated state agency is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(B) of this section, the state agency includes a vocational rehabilitation bureau, division or unit that:
  - A. is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and is responsible for the administration of the designated state agency's vocational rehabilitation program under the State Plan;
  - B. has a full-time director;
  - C. has a staff, at least 90 percent of whom are employed full-time on the rehabilitation work of the organizational unit; and
  - D. is located at an organizational level and has an organizational status within the designated state agency comparable to that of other major organizational units of the designated state agency.
2. The name of the designated state vocational rehabilitation unit is

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

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

The State Plan must contain one of the following assurances.

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

1. is responsible under state law for operating or overseeing the operation of the vocational rehabilitation program in the state and is primarily concerned with the vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(A) of this section.
2. is consumer controlled by persons who:

- A. are individuals with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit major life activities; and
  - B. represent individuals with a broad range of disabilities, unless the designated state unit under the direction of the commission is the state agency for individuals who are blind;
3. includes family members, advocates or other representatives of individuals with mental impairments; and
  4. undertakes the functions set forth in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4).

or

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The State Plan provides for the administration of the plan by a local agency.

If "Yes", the designated state agency:

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

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

The State Plan provides for the state agency to share funding and administrative responsibility with another state agency or local public agency to carry out a joint program to provide services to individuals with disabilities.

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

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

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

This agency is requesting a waiver of statewide.

- (a) Services provided under the State Plan are available in all political subdivisions of the state.
- (b) The state unit may provide services in one or more political subdivisions of the state that increase services or expand the scope of services that are available statewide under this State Plan if the:
  - 1. nonfederal share of the cost of these services is met from funds provided by a local public agency, including funds contributed to a local public agency by a private agency, organization or individual;
  - 2. services are likely to promote the vocational rehabilitation of substantially larger numbers of individuals with disabilities or of individuals with disabilities with particular types of impairments; and
  - 3. state, for purposes other than the establishment of a community rehabilitation program or the construction of a particular facility for community rehabilitation program purposes, requests in Attachment 4.7(b)(3) a waiver of the statewide requirement in accordance with the following requirements:
    - A. identification of the types of services to be provided;
    - B. written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the state unit the nonfederal share of funds;
    - C. written assurance that state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect; and
    - D. written assurance that all other State Plan requirements, including a state's order of selection, will apply to all services approved under the waiver.
- (c) Contributions, consistent with the requirements of 34 CFR 361.60(b)(3)(ii), by private entities of earmarked funds for particular geographic areas within the state may be used as part of the nonfederal share without the state requesting a waiver of the statewide requirement provided that the state notifies the commissioner that it cannot provide the full nonfederal share without using the earmarked funds.

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

- (a) Cooperative agreements with other components of statewide work force investment system.  
The designated state agency or the designated state unit has cooperative agreements with other entities that are components of the statewide work force investment system and replicates those agreements at the local level between individual offices of the designated state unit and local entities carrying out the One-Stop service delivery system or other activities through the statewide work force investment system.
- (b) Cooperation and coordination with other agencies and entities.  
Attachment 4.8(b) (1)-(4) describes the designated state agency's:
  - 1. cooperation with and use of the services and facilities of the federal, state, and local agencies and programs, including programs carried out by the undersecretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture and state

use contracting programs, to the extent that those agencies and programs are not carrying out activities through the statewide work force investment system;

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

(c) Coordination with education officials.

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

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

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

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

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

reservations.

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

- A. strategies for interagency referral and information sharing that will assist in eligibility determinations and the development of individualized plans for employment;
- B. procedures for ensuring that American Indians who are individuals with disabilities and are living near a reservation or tribal service area are provided vocational rehabilitation services; and
- C. provisions for sharing resources in cooperative studies and assessments, joint training activities, and other collaborative activities designed to improve the provision of services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities.

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

(a) In general.

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

(b) Employment of individuals with disabilities.

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

(c) Facilities.

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

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

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

(a) Data system on personnel and personnel development.

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

1. Qualified personnel needs.

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

2. Personnel development.

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

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

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

(c) Personnel standards.

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

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

(d) Staff development.

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

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

(e) Personnel to address individual communication needs.

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

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

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

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

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

(a) Comprehensive statewide assessment.

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

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

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

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

(b) Annual estimates.

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

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

(c) Goals and priorities.

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

3. Order of selection.

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

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

(d) Strategies.

1. Attachment 4.11(d) describes the strategies, including:
  - A. the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities, including how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to those individuals at each stage of the rehabilitation process and how those services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis;
  - B. outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities in accordance with subsection 6.6 of the State Plan supplement, and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
  - C. as applicable, the plan of the state for establishing, developing or improving community rehabilitation programs;
  - D. strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
  - E. strategies for assisting other components of the statewide work force investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

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

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

(e) Evaluation and reports of progress.

1. The designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state unit has a council, jointly submits to the commissioner an annual report on the results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and the progress made in improving the effectiveness of the program from the previous year.
2. Attachment 4.11(e)(2):
  - A. provides an evaluation of the extent to which the goals identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3) were achieved;
  - B. identifies the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals and priorities;
  - C. describes the factors that impeded their achievement, to the extent they were not achieved;
  - D. assesses the performance of the state on the standards and indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
  - E. provides a report consistent with paragraph 4.12(c) of the plan on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were utilized in the preceding year.

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

- (a) The designated state agency reserves and uses a portion of the funds allotted to the state under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the:
  1. development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this State Plan, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities,

consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment identified in Attachment 4.11(a) and goals and priorities of the state identified in Attachments 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3); and

2. support of the funding for the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 105(d)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(i), and the funding of the Statewide Independent Living Council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 705(e)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364.21(i).

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Section 5: Administration of the Provision of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

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

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

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

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

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

- (a) The designated state unit is able to provide the full range of services listed in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the state who apply for services.

(b) If No:

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

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

- (a) Prior to providing any vocational rehabilitation services, except those services identified in paragraph (b), to an eligible individual or to members of the individual's family, the state unit determines whether comparable services and benefits exist under any other program and whether those services and benefits are available to the individual.
- (b) The following services are exempt from a determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits:
1. assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;
  2. counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act;
  3. referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide work force investment system, through agreements developed under Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act, if such services are not available under this State Plan;
  4. job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;

5. rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids and devices; and
  6. post-employment services consisting of the services listed under subparagraphs (1) through (5) of this paragraph.
- (c) The requirements of paragraph (a) of this section do not apply if the determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits under any other program would interrupt or delay:
1. progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment;
  2. an immediate job placement; or
  3. provision of vocational rehabilitation services to any individual who is determined to be at extreme medical risk, based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate qualified medical professional.
- (d) The governor in consultation with the designated state vocational rehabilitation agency and other appropriate agencies ensures that an interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination that meets the requirements of Section 101(a)(8)(B)(i)-(iv) of the Rehabilitation Act takes effect between the designated state unit and any appropriate public entity, including the state Medicaid program, a public institution of higher education, and a component of the statewide work force investment system to ensure the provision of the vocational rehabilitation services identified in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, other than the services identified in paragraph (b) of this section, that are included in the individualized plan for employment of an eligible individual, including the provision of those vocational rehabilitation services during the pendency of any dispute that may arise in the implementation of the interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Section 7: Financial Administration**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Applicants must review the requirements for certification regarding lobbying included in the regulations cited below before completing this form. Applicants must sign this form to comply with the certification requirements under 34 CFR Part 82, "New Restrictions on Lobbying." This certification is a material representation of fact upon which the Department of Education relies when it makes a grant or enters into a cooperative agreement.

As required by Section 1352, Title 31 of the U.S. Code, and implemented at 34 CFR Part 82, for persons entering into a Federal contract, grant or cooperative agreement over \$100,000, as defined at 34 CFR Part 82, Sections 82.105 and 82.110, the applicant certifies that:

(a) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the making of any Federal grant, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal grant or cooperative agreement;

(b) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal grant or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form - LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," in accordance with its instructions;

(c) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subgrants and contracts under grants and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly.

As the duly authorized representative of the applicant, I hereby certify that the applicant will comply with the above certification.

NAME OF APPLICANT CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES (CDRS) BUREAU OF REHABILITATION SERVICES (BRS)	PR/AWARD NUMBER AND / OR PROJECT NAME TITLE I - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION VR-H126A130007
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE AMY PORTER, ACTING DIRECTOR	
SIGNATURE 	DATE 6-18-13

## CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

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(b) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal grant or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form - LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," in accordance with its instructions;

(c) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subgrants and contracts under grants and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly.

As the duly authorized representative of the applicant, I hereby certify that the applicant will comply with the above certification.

NAME OF APPLICANT CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES (DCRS) BUREAU OF REHABILITATION SERVICES (BRS)	PR/AWARD NUMBER AND / OR PROJECT NAME TITLE VI - SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SE-H187A130008
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE AMY PORTER, ACTING DIRECTOR	
SIGNATURE 	DATE 6-18-13

## **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 (two);
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 (one); 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 are also a part of DORS. 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 hosted two public meetings in April 2013 in Bridgeport and Hartford. Consumers, their families, and others interested in the VR program were invited to review the draft of the 2014 State Plan (*posted on the BRS Website along with a PowerPoint presentation to help consumers understand the 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.

Four representatives of the SRC attended the public meetings to assess the effectiveness of the VR program by listening to consumer comments and questions. Amy Porter, BRS Acting Director, presented an overview of the State Plan, highlighting the goals for the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program, and answered general questions about the VR program. Additional staff was available to respond to questions in smaller group settings or individually, as needed.

In addition to providing comments at the public meetings, anyone who could not attend, but wanted to share a comment or ask a question could send it by mail, e-mail, or fax. The period for written communication was open beyond the dates of the public meetings enabling sufficient time for someone to submit their comments if they were unable to attend a public meeting.

About 14 participants attended the Bridgeport meeting and about 20 attended the Hartford meeting; only one person submitted a written comment. Both meetings presented a variety of inquiries. From the public meetings and in the letter that was submitted, the following are recurring comments for BRS to consider:

1. Consumers expressed concern that the length of time they wait for appointments or responses from their counselors is too long;
2. Consumers desired more information to better understand how public benefits impact working and earning a wage;
3. Consumers questioned services from other agencies and how they support or interfere with the VR program, including deaf-blind services; and
4. Consumers expressed appreciation for the help they had received from BRS.

Evaluations of the public meetings were distributed to enable attendees to share feedback on the process and to make suggestions to improve future public meetings. Feedback from these surveys and comments from SRC members in attendance at the public meetings included positive statements about the agenda and implementation of the public meetings and the opportunity everyone had to comment or ask questions publicly or in smaller group or individual settings.

### **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.

**BRS Response:** As we indicated last year, many of these buildings are not state-owned buildings. We are also in the process of securing new space in many of these areas. We will work with the landlords to explore the possibilities for new signs, and present a plan to the SRC by December, 2013.

**Recommendation 2 –**

The following offices need more accessible parking:

- Danbury, Hartford, Stamford, and Waterbury.

**BRS Response:** Similar to the response to Recommendation 1, we will work with the current or future landlords to address the parking issue, and will make this a priority issue as we secure additional space.

**Recommendation 3 –**

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

- Danbury, Danielson, Hartford, and Torrington.

**BRS Response:** We now have staff in both the Hartford and Danielson offices that greet visitors. The Hartford office requires that the visitor check in with the security guard upon arrival, but a staff person is then contacted and comes out to greet the visitor. Both Torrington and Danbury BRS offices are located in large state offices. Sometimes our visitors get caught up in the large waiting areas outside of BRS offices and may not get the initial greeting we expect. In an effort to solve this we have put up "BRS" signs in the large waiting areas. We also direct visitors, when we schedule appointments on the phone, how to find our office and bypass the often long lines for the other programs. We are hopeful that this is increasing access to our offices, and we will continue to monitor.

**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.

**BRS Response:** We are working with our administrative staff to identify relevant training, and will highlight customer service as part of the training plan. We will also be offering training on multicultural issues, to be sure that our customer service is culturally sensitive and responsive.

**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.

**BRS Response:** The responsibility for initiating, identifying, negotiating and approving all leases rests with the Department of Administrative Services' Lease and Transfer Unit. We work closely with them to address our needs, but they have the ultimate responsibility. For the specific offices identified, we will describe our current approach or pending plans.

Middletown: We have office space in Middletown. While it may not be ideal space, we are able to meet with consumers in this office and provide adequate services. We continue to search for space where our counselors have private offices, rather than having to coordinate meeting space with another agency.

Enfield: We have not been able to finalize the lease for an Enfield office, but anticipate that this will be completed by the end of the summer 2013. This will decrease the amount of travel that our Enfield counselors are currently doing.

Willimantic: We also have an active Request for Space for Willimantic, but have not been able to identify adequate space. Consumers in the Willimantic area are seen by counselors from our Manchester office. Consumers have the choice of coming in to the office, or meeting with counselors in the community. Counselors have been equipped with laptops and access to the internet so that they can access our case management system from wherever they meet.

#### **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.

**BRS Response:** We have a Task Force that is working on strategies to improve employment outcomes for our underserved populations, including individuals with psychiatric disabilities. We will continue to work with this Task Force to develop strategies that improve our quality and our outcomes. We also will be offering training on the new DSM-V to ensure that our staff remains current with new diagnostic criteria specific to psychiatric disabilities.

This screen was last updated on June 18, 2013 2:33 PM by Evelyn Knight

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

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

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

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

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

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), the BRS parent agency, currently has a Memorandum of Agreement with DSS and continues to support DORS as it further transitions into an independent agency. We still operate many BRS offices in co-located DSS offices.

We also maintain collaborations with various program divisions within DSS which enables coordination of additional services for individuals with significant disabilities for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Jobs First Employment Services, Employment Success, Transportation for Economic Independence, and employment opportunities for individuals in the Adult Services Unit, specifically the nursing facility transition program.

The Department of Social Services adopted a Universal Design Model to make reasonable accommodations for individuals needing DSS services. BRS collaborates with the TANF Program and continues to staff one state-funded TANF/VR Counselor. This counselor screens TANF consumers subject to sanctions for not complying with their employment plans. These screenings are done at the conciliation interview. As part of that process, consumers are offered the opportunity to be screened in one or more of these three areas: Mental Health, Substance Abuse and/or Learning Disabilities. If the screening results identify a significant disability, the consumer will be invited to apply for VR services.

### **B. The Department on Aging**

The new Department on Aging (formerly the Bureau of Aging, Community, and Social Work Services within DSS) will receive internal office supports from DORS.

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

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

There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that embeds a VR counselor within the clinical team of a local mental health authority (LMHA). At this site, the VR counselor and the clinical team collaborate to better serve individuals with significant psychiatric disabilities. At the other two sites, the VR counselors provide consultation and direct services through frequent on-site visits.

### **D. The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) of DORS**

Due to the merger of BESB into DORS, we no longer need a MOA to work with the VR program for individuals who are blind. However, we will continue to follow the previously established MOA which outlines services to be provided for consumers in instances where individuals meet the eligibility criteria for both VR programs.

### **E. Sign Language Interpreting Unit of DORS**

Due to the merger of BESB into DORS, the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired has been renamed the Sign Language Interpreting Unit of the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). We no longer need a MOA to work with this unit. However, we will continue to follow the previously established MOA which sets forth the terms and conditions for purchasing certified sign language interpreting services. The MOA established rates, scheduling, and cancellation procedures.

### **F. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS)**

BRS has an Interagency agreement with DDS to establish a statewide system of coordinated and cost effective vocational/employment services for people with intellectual disabilities with minimal overlap of resources.

### **G. The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN)**

BRS and the MPTN have a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate vocational rehabilitation services and work with clients on a collaborative basis.

This screen was last updated on June 18, 2013 by Evelyn Knight

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

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

### **Coordination with Education Officials**

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

BRS, the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB), and the Connecticut State University System have an Interagency Agreement which delineates the responsibilities of all parties in providing auxiliary aids and services to students with disabilities, when such auxiliary aids and services are necessary for the student to access and benefit from higher education. The intent of this agreement is to promote a collaborative approach in addressing the needs of students with disabilities, to improve the coordination of services, and to efficiently

allocate shared responsibilities. The agreement clearly identifies which party provides a specific auxiliary aid or service and under what conditions it should be provided. It also includes a process for interagency dispute resolution.

BRS has a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC) – a division of Charter Oak College and DMHAS to develop online training for individuals with disabilities, family members, educators, and employers to assist individuals obtain employment. Some training modules are geared specifically to vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors and community rehabilitation providers (CRPs). This MOA is effective through March 31, 2016.

BRS has a Memorandum of Agreement with Southern Connecticut State University Center of Assistive Technology to operate a Loan Recycling Center through September 30, 2014.

## **B. High School**

BRS has been working with multiple state agencies and workforce partners to enhance the service provision for young adults transitioning from high school to work. BRS follows the federal regulations from RSA regarding comparable services and is guided by our agency policies on transition services when students with disabilities transition from school to VR services. These policies include developing an employment plan that specifies what services and supports BRS will provide directly upon graduation from high school. The bureau's training grant focuses resources on the procedures for counselors to follow, as each counselor is assigned one or more schools to cover within each of Connecticut's 143 districts that provide secondary services.

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

To this end, we have the following agreements:

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations**

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

BRS has Memoranda of Understanding with local Workforce Boards to provide One-Stop services to consumers.

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

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

- supported employment services; and
- extended services.

The Bureau provides supported employment and extended services to consumers with significant disabilities, as appropriate. Bureau counselors work with each individual consumer to identify necessary services. In the process of developing an Individual Plan for Employment, the counselor and consumer make decisions about the need for supported employment or extended services. Once the services are deemed necessary, the counselor and consumer identify a source of long-term funding and meet with a representative case manager, if appropriate. Once long-term supports are obtained, the plan can be executed. Supported employment and extended services are provided in partnership with our statewide network of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs). These arrangements are based on fee-for-service contracts. We use a series of strategies to accomplish the goals of supported or extended employment, including the following:

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

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

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

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

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

### **Data System on Personnel**

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) maintains a computerized record system for personnel needs, resources, and training. In addition to this 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 Rehabilitation Services (DORS). 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 DORS Interpreting Unit 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.

This screen was last updated on June 17, 2013 8:50 AM by Evelyn Knight

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

### **I. Introduction**

In Connecticut, the Bureau of Rehabilitation (BRS) offers Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services to help individuals with significant physical and mental disabilities find and maintain employment (<http://www.brs.state.ct.us/aboutus.htm>). These services may include a broad range of assistance and are offered to eligible Connecticut residents at no cost. Besides having significant physical or mental disabilities, a consumer's disabilities must also cause considerable employment barriers, and they must require VR services in order to become employed. Through individualized VR services offered by BRS, consumers are supported during the preparation for employment, job search, application/interview process, getting hired, maintaining employment, and working towards achieving all their employment-related goals.

Gathering data from individuals with disabilities and from others involved in the provision of VR services helps BRS to explore VR service needs and evaluate the impact of its services. Outcomes from surveys as well as data from administrative records play an important role in informing VR professionals, administrators, policy makers, and other stakeholders and are a significant source of credible information for planning future programs and services. VR services have the potential to empower individuals with disabilities and may lead to higher-quality employment and more meaningful careers.

### **II. Background**

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) published new guidelines in the fall of 2009 for conducting a three-year Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). This includes an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, specifically the VR needs of:

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

As a requirement of the CSNA and as part of the annual State Plan, the Connecticut BRS developed a strategy to follow the new RSA reporting outline with results of a comprehensive assessment and to identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state. To meet RSA expectations and identify unmet needs for populations specified by RSA, the 2013 BRS CSNA includes a focused analysis of data from targeted Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) BRS Counselor, and Consumer surveys, and outcomes from Key Informant Interviews. In addition, the CSNA reports relevant findings from a subset of the 2011 Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Needs Assessment, including data from Employer and Provider surveys as well as a People with Disabilities survey, a small number of whose respondents had current or recent experience with the VR system.

This summary report briefly describes the methods used in the 2013 CSNA assessment, the results, and offers conclusions and recommendations.

### **III. Methodology**

The 2013 CSNA is comprised of five parts: 1) Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) survey, 2) BRS Counselor survey, 3) Consumer survey, 4) Key Informant interviews, and 5) Focused analysis of a subset of data from the 2011 Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Needs Assessment (MIG NA). The complete 2011 MIG NA reports can be viewed at <http://www.connect-ability.com> under the Research Papers tab.

The CRP, BRS counselor, and consumer survey instruments, as well as the semi-structured key informant interview guide were all developed by the University of Connecticut Health Center research team with input from BRS and the State Rehabilitation Council.

#### **A. CRP survey**

The CRP survey comprised five overall areas: background information, service needs, minority individuals with disabilities, community rehabilitation providers, and interagency collaboration. Participants were recruited at the annual CRP conference on June 7, 2012 in Rocky Hill, CT. A total of 55 CRPs representing 31 agencies attended the conference, and 42 CRPs completed surveys, resulting in a response rate of 76 percent.

#### **B. BRS Counselor survey**

The BRS counselor survey comprised ten overall areas and included service experience with individuals with most significant disabilities, unserved and underserved populations, and minority individuals with disabilities. All BRS VR counselors (n=83) who attended one of three regional meetings held in the fall of 2012 completed the survey. The response rate was 100 percent.

#### **C. Consumer survey**

The consumer survey comprised six overall areas including experiences with VR services, employment barriers, and BRS staff and employment goals. The sample consisted of 991 BRS VR clients from the BRS database whose cases closed during a six month time period, February through July 2012, *without finding employment*. It included 422 with a case closed status of 28 (without employment but received services under a plan) and 569 with a case closed status of 30 (without employment and did not receive services under a plan). People whose cases closed without finding employment were surveyed in order to explore their experiences and better understand their needs and barriers so that ways to improve services can be considered and implemented where appropriate.

Each of the 991 clients received a mailed survey. Nonresponders received a second mailed survey and following the second mailing a randomly selected 150 nonresponder clients were identified to be contacted by phone.

The combination of mailed surveys and telephone calls produced a final response rate of 25 percent.

#### **D. Key Informant interviews**

Ten interview questions focused on various target populations including those with significant disabilities, and those identified as unserved and underserved. Key informants were asked to describe major gaps or barriers that exist within VR and measures that can be taken to better serve individuals with significant disabilities. Key informants were also asked to provide input about supported employment, community rehabilitation providers (CRPs), and the state workforce investment system and how services involving these supports could be improved.

BRS identified 25 individuals representing various organizations throughout the state as key informants. Of these, 23 participated and two did not respond to interview scheduling requests. The response rate was 92 percent.

#### **E. 2011 MIG NA: Vocational Rehabilitation Focused Analysis**

Three groups of consumers who participated in the 2011 MIG NA consumer surveys were identified: clients who received no VR services, those who were served by VR within the three years, between April 1, 2008 and April 1, 2011, and were closed, and clients who were served by VR and were active as of April 1, 2011.

Of the 1,813 2011 NA respondents, 87 are former BRS clients and used VR services in the three years between April 1, 2008 and April 1, 2011. Thirty-two respondents are current BRS clients and were active as of April 1, 2011.

The first part of the analyses using the 2011 MIG NA data compared those with no VR (n=1694) to the closed (n=87) and active (n=32) groups.

The second part of the analysis examined the subset of current employed consumers (n=398) and compared those with no VR (n=339) to those with any VR, either closed or active VR group, (n=41)

The third part of the analysis looked only at the subset of VR users and compared the closed VR group (n=87) with the active VR group (n=32).

A brief summary of pertinent outcomes from the 2011 Employer and Provider surveys was included. These describe employer and provider practices and the unique challenges they experience related to the employment of people with disabilities.

### **IV. Results**

#### **A. Community Rehabilitation Provider Survey**

The CRP survey evaluated the service needs of individuals in several groups including individuals with significant disabilities, minority individuals, unserved and underserved people with disabilities. Barriers that exist for these groups and suggested ways BRS and CRPs can improve service provision are highlighted below. The role and availability of CRP services, the degree of interagency collaboration between certain agencies and barriers that prevent them from working together effectively, are also mentioned.

#### Service needs for clients with significant disabilities

- Some clients need mental health assessment or substance abuse counseling, but this is only sometimes available.
- More than half of CRPs indicated that while some clients need support services and assistive technology, these services are also only sometimes available.
- Other areas of need include improving self-advocacy skills, soft skills training, and pre-vocational skills training.

Service needs for minority individuals with disabilities

- The greatest service needs are outreach programs and publications that target this group to raise awareness of the availability of services.
- Training that focuses on self-esteem development, advocacy, and personal empowerment would benefit this population.

Service needs for unserved and underserved populations of individuals with disabilities

- Job skill training is essential for both unserved and underserved populations.
- Accessible and affordable transportation is needed to assist consumers in participating more fully in the VR program and to meet their Employment Plan goals.
- Disability awareness is important for the unserved population.
- The most critical employment barriers to address are lack of employer awareness, language barriers, and inadequate job skills training.

Community Rehabilitation Providers

- While CRPs were split on whether or not more CRPs are needed, it was suggested that particularly more multilingual CRPs may be needed to broaden services to Spanish and other non-English speaking BRS clients.

Interagency collaboration

- Barriers that hinder interagency collaboration include different agency expectations, lack of funding, and lack of staff.

**B. Counselor Survey**

The Counselor survey evaluated service experiences with individuals in several groups including individuals with most significant disabilities, unserved and underserved and minority people with disabilities. VR counselors evaluated CRP and supported employment services, providing feedback on agency or local area partnerships and specified BRS initiatives.

Service barriers reported by counselors are listed below for three different groups of clients.

<b>Population</b>	<b>Service barriers</b>
Individuals with most significant disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of accessible and affordable transportation to assist consumers in participating more fully in the VR program</li> </ul>
Unserved/underserved individuals with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of accessible and affordable transportation to assist consumers in participating more fully in the VR</li> </ul>

- program
- Lack of family support and employer understanding
- Language

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Service needs for minority individuals with disabilities

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- Language and culture

Additional survey outcomes and suggestions made by VR counselors in the categories below indicate the strong, positive role and opportunity BRS has to more fully integrate people with disabilities into employment through improvements in training, employer outreach, and other services needed to support job seekers.

#### CRPs and supported employment services

- CRPs are knowledgeable about the services BRS consumers need, but they do not always hire and train qualified staff to provide those services.
- The most common barriers to supported employment services include lack of funding, inaccessibility to services and lack of time.

#### Agency or local area partnerships

- A clear partnership was indicated between BRS and DDS.
- Partnerships between BRS and DOL and DMHAS need to be strengthened.
- Barriers to be addressed in the BRS/DDS partnership include different agency expectations, lack of staff knowledge, and training, and long wait period for services.
- Barriers between BRS and DOL are similar but include insufficient number of staff in both agencies to address service needs.
- The partnership between BRS and DMHAS is also challenged by different agency expectations and lack of staff knowledge and training, but unlike DDS and DOL, long-term support was mentioned as an ongoing challenge for the BRS and DMHAS partnership.

#### BRS initiatives

- BRS initiatives are beneficial, but need improvement.
- The purpose of the Autism Spectrum Committee is not clear and better collaboration to improve it is suggested.
- Barriers are common to a number of different initiatives and include transportation, lack of employer engagement, limited employer outreach or limited job opportunities.

#### Transportation

Assistance with transportation in the VR program is an ancillary service and is available to help individuals access other needed services and/or help them meet their Employment Plan goals. Reports of transportation as a barrier to employment, whether for ancillary services or to help a consumer get to work, is an important policy issue for people with disabilities who want to work. However, BRS services can only assist with transportation for VR-related activities.

### **C. Consumer Survey**

The consumer survey evaluated experiences with VR services, BRS staff, employment and related barriers of individuals whose cases had closed without finding employment. People

whose cases closed without finding employment were selected in order to explore their experiences and better understand their needs and barriers so that ways to improve services can be considered and implemented where appropriate.

#### Service experiences

- Most clients were satisfied with the location of the office and its accessibility as well as their involvement in setting job goals, their counselor's respect, and their involvement in choosing the services they received.
- Fewer individuals were as satisfied with length of time to receive services, the services themselves, counselor responsiveness, and overall experience with BRS.

#### Employment experiences

- Less than a quarter of respondents reported currently working.
- The majority of clients who reported working were dissatisfied with benefits, opportunities to advance, and wages.

#### Employment barriers

- Lack of job search skills
- Discrimination against people with disabilities
- Insufficient VR services

#### Experiences with BRS staff and employment goals

- Overall, respondents were satisfied with BRS staff and their employment goals.
- Gaps in services indicate the need for better communication and follow-up, more consistency in providing training or educational support, and developing a broader range of employment opportunities through collaboration.

### **D. Key Informant Interviews**

Key informant questions focused on various target populations including those with significant disabilities and those identified as unserved and underserved. Key informants were asked to describe major gaps or barriers that exist within VR for people with significant disabilities and measures that can be taken to better serve these individuals and to provide input about supported employment, CRPs, and the state workforce investment system and how services involving these supports could be improved.

Populations that were identified as either unserved or underserved included the following.

#### Unserved populations

- People who fall through the cracks in the BRS eligibility criteria, such as certain transition-age students, students placed out of state, persons with mental health and addiction issues.
- Individuals who require significant ongoing supports and a portion of the autism population.

### Underserved populations

- Persons with hearing disabilities, transition-age youth (including students in Corrections and Section 504 students), non-English speakers, persons on the autism spectrum, persons with severe disabilities who have the most significant needs, persons with cognitive disabilities, mental illness and substance use disorders, the Native American population, persons who live in rural areas, and those who are homeless.

### Barriers

The most commonly perceived gaps identified in the BRS system include:

- Lack of knowledge of BRS services, and gaps in BRS workers' knowledge of particular disabilities, such as deafness and autism.
- Other gaps mentioned include poor communication with deaf clients, a slow eligibility process, and lack of coordination among case managers and job developers.

### Supported employment and workforce investment system

Supported employment was described as a key service for a subset of BRS clients, especially those with intellectual or mental health disabilities and those on the autism spectrum.

The workforce investment system is perceived as a key BRS partner whose collaboration has enhanced training and internships opportunities. Limitations described in the system include:

- Limited knowledge of some employer priorities.
- An emphasis on speedy outcomes at the expense of hard to place individuals.

### Community rehabilitation providers

There were mixed opinions on both the quantity and quality of CRPs. There may be a need for additional CRPs in some geographic areas and to serve underserved populations such as those with autism and hearing disabilities. While many existing CRPs do an excellent job, others produce lower quality results and require additional training. Informants also noted a need for increased cultural competence in both CRPs and BRS workers.

### Positive responses about BRS

Informants related several positive observations about BRS, its employees, and progress over the years. BRS employees were described as dedicated, creative, and responsive to ideas that would enhance their clients' welfare. They also praised efforts to enhance inter-agency cooperation through Connect-Ability and other channels.

## **E. 2011 MIG NA: Vocational Rehabilitation Focused Analysis**

Although the 2011 MIG NA was completed for a broader purpose and not focused on VR outcomes, a VR-focused analysis of that data provides an opportunity for combining existing information with new information to inform the State Plan. While only about seven percent of MIG NA respondents had recent or current experience with the VR system, it is instructive to compare their responses with those of other persons with disabilities. Results of the focused analysis below are by VR group followed by the Employer and Provider outcomes.

## No VR versus the closed group versus the active group

### *Demographics: similarities*

- Most consumers in the three groups were unmarried, of working age between 30 and 54, more likely to have completed high school, and reported an insufficient amount of money to make ends meet.

### *Demographics: differences*

- Respondents in the VR groups were more likely to report excellent or good health.
- Individuals with VR reported a lower rate of physical and mental disability and had a lower percentage of substance use disorder than consumers with active or closed VR cases.

### *Work experiences: similarities*

- More than half of consumers in all three groups reported they had worked in the past but were not currently working.

### *Work experiences: differences*

- A greater percentage of those in the active VR group reported actively seeking work, but a larger proportion of those with no VR reported not actively seeking employment.
- The prospect of getting a job in the next 12 months was believed to be more likely among those in the active group and least likely among the no VR group.
- Active VR users (29%) were the most likely to have turned down a raise or promotion.

## Current employed consumers: No VR group versus any VR group

There were more similarities than differences between these groups.

- On average, consumers with no VR worked only about one hour more per week than those in any VR group.
- The greatest percentage of consumers in both groups reported earning hourly wages between \$8.25 and \$9.99.
- The majority of consumers in the two groups believe they use a lot or some of their talents in their current job.
- Most consumers in both groups reported their main job as a service job.

## VR users only: Closed versus active

This subset analysis explored differences between closed and active VR users and examined the importance of AT and supports, transportation barriers, and challenges consumers face in the process of getting or maintaining employment.

### *Employment-related similarities*

- Both groups noted the importance of computer aids, communication aids, and transportation aids in getting and maintaining employment.
- Both groups reported that disability-related health complications, self-regulation, interpersonal problems, and lack of education and training make it difficult to obtain or maintain employment.

### *Employment-related differences*

- While multiple types of supports were reported to be important to consumers in both groups, support from co-workers was significantly more important for consumers in the active group.

### *Employment barriers*

- Transportation difficulties continue to be a barrier to employment for both groups.
- Compared to the closed group, a slightly greater percentage in the active group reported the barriers of not having a person available to provide transportation and problems with the public transit system.

### Employer outcomes

- Results from the Employer survey demonstrated mixed attitudes related to hiring people with disabilities.
- More than two-thirds of employers agreed that employers are generally reluctant to hire someone who they know has a disability (70%).
- Two-thirds of employers also agreed that the benefits outweigh the costs of hiring an employee with a disability (67%).
- Forty-seven percent of employers participating in the 2011 NA reported they have hired people with disabilities.
- Over half of employers were willing to provide a job reassignment (58%), change a person's hours (56%), or provide modifications to the physical environment (53%), but only one-third were willing to provide technology (e.g., voice recognition software) or allow a person to telecommute (29%).
- Employers in for-profit organizations appear to have the greatest number of challenges to overcome in hiring people with disabilities.

### Provider outcomes

- Providers are concerned about the mixed attitudes of employers including their lack of awareness and knowledge about people with disabilities and their reluctance to hire them.
- Connect-Ability and its development of a Technical Assistance Center is furthering the employment of people with disabilities by providing a broad range of supports and continues to inform employers, service providers, and job seekers about employment and other topics related to people with disabilities.
- Providers underscored the importance of providing consumers with more training including targeting youth with disabilities and improving transitional services.
- Providing accommodations and a lack of meaningful job opportunities for people with disabilities is a barrier.

## **V. Recommendations**

The CSNA incorporated input from all participants in the VR system including consumers, counselors, CRPs, and other informants with interest in and knowledge of the system. Each of these sources yielded recommendations for BRS consideration in improving its outreach and services to its constituents, particularly those with significant disabilities, minorities, unserved and underserved individuals, and those who may benefit from supported employment and the

state’s workforce investment system. In many cases, the same issues were noted by multiple sources. The most prominent issues mentioned in multiple places included the following:

- Opportunities for increasing system efficiency and effectiveness;
- The need for increased communication and education about the nature and availability of BRS services;
- Subsets of the BRS constituency that appear to be underserved, such as those with hearing disabilities or autism;
- The need for increased cultural competency among BRS counselors and CRPs;
- Opportunities for more effective relationships with employers; and
- Lack of transportation as a barrier to effective BRS services

Specific recommendations on these issues and others gleaned from each of the five elements of the CSNA are noted below.

**CRP recommendations**

Some suggestions indicate what CRPs think BRS should do and others indicate what they think they should do as CRPs to improve services.

<b>Suggested action:</b>	<b>BRS</b>	<b>CRPs</b>
Improve service provision to clients with significant disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase transportation options and funding to assist consumers in reaching VR goals</li> <li>• Make better connections with employers</li> <li>• Provide more coordination with service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop better connections with employers</li> <li>• Increase employment services staff</li> <li>• Coordinate more effectively with BRS</li> </ul>
Increase service provision to minorities with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop better transportation options to assist consumers in reaching VR goals</li> <li>• Provide information about services in multicultural formats</li> <li>• Add more culturally diverse individuals to staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve cultural competence</li> <li>• Provide information in multicultural formats</li> <li>• Increase collaborative efforts across agencies</li> <li>• Increase transportation options for clients to assist them in VR-related activities</li> </ul>
Improve service provision to unserved and underserved individuals with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase transportation options to assist consumers in reaching VR goals</li> <li>• Improve interagency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise public awareness</li> <li>• Increase interagency collaboration</li> <li>• Participate in more CRP</li> </ul>

	collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise public awareness through outreach, and additional pre-employment training</li> </ul>	training and additional pre-employment training
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**Counselor recommendations**

Suggestions to improve services are listed below for three different groups of clients.

<b>Population</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Individuals with most significant disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of transportation options</li> <li>• Jobs skills and soft skills training</li> </ul>
Unserved/underserved individuals with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase agency outreach to community organizations</li> <li>• Provide transportation training/options for both groups</li> <li>• Increase staff outreach to unserved consumers</li> <li>• Increase interagency collaboration</li> </ul>
Minority individuals with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase bilingual and multilingual staff, forms, vendors</li> <li>• Staff training for cultural competence</li> </ul>

**CRPs and supported employment services**

- Further evaluate CRPs and the adequacy of the services they provide.
- Find alternate funding options, seek more Employment Opportunities Program (EOP) funding, and increase collaboration with DDS and DMHAS.

**Agency or local area partnerships**

Recommendations for BRS and partnership agencies are overwhelmingly the same:

- Provide better communication.
- Improve coordination of services.
- Increase employee education and training.

**BRS initiatives**

- Improve agency collaboration.
- Increase employer outreach.
- Develop more work sites across several initiatives.

**Transportation**

- Improve transportation options and services where appropriate to support consumer participation in VR programs.

**Consumer recommendations**

- Improve staff/client interactions, including better dissemination of information, ideas, concerns, goals and results.
- To avoid gaps in counselor services, develop and implement protocols when clients have to be transferred to a different counselor (i.e., a letter to the client explaining the reason for a transfer and introducing the new counselor; conduct a briefing between the current counselor and new one for a more seamless transfer).
- Provide more comprehensive education and training to clients, including training on advanced computer skills and on-the-job training to increase opportunities for better wages and promotions.
- Continue to develop a network of employers who are disability-friendly in an effort to create more work opportunities for people who are qualified and want to work.
- Provide more outreach to clients whose cases are closed and offer additional VR services.

### **Key Informant recommendations**

#### Suggestions to address barriers

- Increase visibility for BRS with schools and employers and in the community through education about what BRS is and what it offers.
- Create and train specialists (both BRS counselors and CRPs) in particular disabilities such as deafness, autism and brain injury.
- Simplify the eligibility process, expedite intake, and create a fast track alternative for those ready to begin a job search.
- Promote better method of coordination among case managers and job developers across state agencies, including the sharing of job leads and employer ties.

#### Suggestions to improve supported employment and workforce investment system

- Expand the availability of supported employment to transition-age students.
- Provide better training for job coaches.
- Modify performance metrics in workforce investment system to allow incentives for working with hard-to-place individuals.
- Increase mutual understanding between employers and workforce investment system

#### Suggestions to strengthen CRP services

- Provide additional training.
- Enhance cultural competence.
- Hire more individuals of varied backgrounds and additional persons with disabilities.

### **2011 MIG NA: Vocational Rehabilitation Focused Analysis**

The following recommendations are suggested to address some of the major challenges identified by respondents in the 2011 MIG NA.

- Provide additional information about VR services
  - Consumers with no VR are the largest group not actively seeking employment and should be targeted for receiving additional information.

- Provide education and job specific training to help consumers move to a better or higher paying position.
- Increase awareness about accommodations and other supports to enable more employment opportunities for VR consumers (e.g., flexible work opportunities, such as telecommuting, part-time and more flexible schedules, freelance jobs)
- Improve and expand transportation options to assist consumers in meeting their Employment Plan and to ensure the maximum benefit of participating in VR.  
This summary was prepared by the University of Connecticut Health Center, funded by the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Rehabilitation Services.

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

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

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

According to the most recent US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2,227,298 non-institutionalized persons aged 18-64 years old lived in Connecticut in 2011. From this population, 1,626,852 were employed; 70,687 of these were persons with a disability. During this same year, 187,407 people in this age range were unemployed. Of this number, 19,080 were persons with a disability. There were also 95,606 persons with disabilities out of a total of 413,039 in this age range who were not in the labor force.

These statistics indicate 19,080 individuals in this age category with disabilities may be eligible for services in Connecticut. In addition, an unknown number of the 70,687 who are working may be under employed and may require services to attain employment consistent with their unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice.

These statistics 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) 2013, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) projects that it will serve 4,903 eligible consumers in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act. This is a 2.6% increase from FFY 2012, when 4,777 consumers received services in IPEs under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

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 trainings of newer staff, a 7% increase in consumers served under an IPE was realized in FFY 2012 over FFY 2011. Anticipated production increases are further substantiated by a 3% increase (through 3/31/13) in the number of consumers receiving services for FFY 2013 compared to the same point in the year during FFY 2012.

BRS had been operating in an Order of Selection (OOS) since 1991, serving only all Priority 1 (Most Significant Disability) and Priority 2 (Significant Disability) consumers, until the onset of FFY 2013 (10/01/12). While the Bureau recognized it would take some time for referral sources and the general

public to respond to the change in OOS, the number of eligibility determinations for Priority 3 cases was much lower than anticipated. As of 3/31/13, approximately 2% of consumers currently being assisted by BRS have a Disability that is Not Significant.

Based upon historical data coupled with current trending, the Bureau expects to serve 5,352 eligible consumers in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act in FFY 2014; an increase of 9.2% above FFY 2013 projections.

## **Supported Employment**

During FFY 2012, BRS purchased services for 180 consumers eligible for Supported Employment funding under Title VI-B of the Act, utilizing \$323,565. The Bureau spent \$5,216 more in Title VI-B funding than it did in FFY 2011; and over four times more Title VI-B funding than it did in 2010. 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 newly hired counselors and will offer this training 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 2013 (year to date 3/31/13), BRS has purchased services for 69 individuals, expending \$123,691 in Title VI-B funds. This represents a pace slightly lower than FFY 2012 service and expenditure levels. By the conclusion of FFY 2013 the Bureau expects to provide purchased services for 101 consumers using Title VI-B with a total projected expenditure of \$307,471. In combination with the 4,903 individuals projected to receive services under Title I, the total number of individuals who could be served by BRS in FFY 2013 is 5,004.

For FFY 2014, the Bureau anticipates that 111 individuals could potentially receive services funded under Title VI-B. In combination with the 5,352 individuals projected to receive services under Title I, the total number of individuals who could be served in FFY 2014 is 5,463.

## **Costs of Services**

Total Title I purchase of services (POS) costs for all eligible consumers in FFY 2013 is projected to be approximately \$12.4 million. This figure is consistent with the total projected one year ago, despite the fact that the number of Priority 3 consumers applying for services once OOS was opened was drastically lower than expected. The Bureau recognizes that POS for Priority 1 and 2 individuals continued to expand, exceeding anticipated costs. These expanded costs replaced the projected expenditures for Priority 3 consumers thus resulting in accurate projections. These expanded costs were driven by historically high service numbers and expenditures to Community Rehabilitation Providers and by increases in On-the-Job training services. It should also be noted that over the course of FFY 2013, the Bureau has continued serving significant numbers of consumers by funding their participation in several BRS placement initiative programs, including Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs (ISTPP) and Summer Youth Employment Programs (SYEP). These expenditures are also imbedded within our POS totals.

Upon examining expenditure trends in POS for Priority 1 and Priority 2 individuals, as well as allowing for potential expansion of costs in providing services for individuals of Priority 3 status, BRS projects to expend approximately \$13.2 million in FFY 2014. This projection is predicated on a 6.1% growth in all eligible consumers served over FFY 2013 level. Please note that total expenditures may increase with greater numbers of Priority 3 consumers receiving services in FFY 2014.

With respect to the 111 consumers projected to receive services under Title VI-B during FFY 2014, the Bureau forecasts a complete expenditure of carried forward FFY 2013 funding and allocated FFY 2014 Supported Employment funding, which is expected to be approximately \$307, 471.

Category	Title I or Title VI	Estimated Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
All Eligible Consumers	Title I	\$13,200,000	5,352	\$2,466
Most Significant	Title VI	\$307,471	111	\$2,770
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
Totals		\$13,507,471	5,463	\$2,472

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

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

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

### Goals and Priorities

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

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

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

*Priority areas:*

- customer service and provision of information
- ongoing skill development

**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
- 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.

This screen was last updated on May 30, 2013 11:50AM by Evelyn Knight

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

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

(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.

## **Attachment 4.11(d) – State’s Strategies**

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

**Describe the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.**

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) has a number of objectives that will be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities:

- To increase access to transportation for Bureau consumers, we will partner with Connect-Ability staff to identify transportation resources.
- To create more partnerships with Businesses and more opportunities for employment, we will increase the use of On-the-Job (OJT) Trainings and continue to offer Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs.
- To strengthen the partnerships with state agencies, we will participate in cross agency trainings through APSE – the Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst.
- BRS will develop materials and post on the BRS and Connect-Ability websites.
- Develop Distance Learning Modules in one or more of the following areas: self-advocacy, soft skills, pre-vocational, job skills and job search skills for consumer use.

**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; and describe how assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis.**

BRS makes Assistive Technology (AT) available to individuals with disabilities through the Connecticut Tech Act Project throughout the rehabilitation process across the state in the following ways:

- VR counselors may solicit the agency's Assistive Technology Consultant for guidance and assistance to ensure that AT devices and services are considered in the consumer's plan and provided when appropriate.
- The AT consultant can conduct comprehensive AT evaluations with consumers and can provide training in the use of newly-acquired AT, as needed.
- Through the Assistive Technology Device Loan Program at BRS, VR consumers may borrow and try out devices to help them make informed decisions that the AT device is appropriate and that it will remove or reduce barriers, as expected. The inventory for this program includes a wide range of devices across the AT continuum from low to high tech, across disability categories (i.e.: hearing, vision, mobility, computer access, cognitive, communication, etc.), and across potential work environments.
- VR Counselors and the AT Consultant collaborate with other entities such as school systems, colleges/universities, employers, independent living centers, state Medicaid waiver programs, and insurance plans to facilitate the provision of AT devices and services.
- The AT consultant distributes an electronic Tech Act newsletter and maintains a Tech Act website to provide information about AT trends for anyone interested in AT.

**Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities; and what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.**

As a result of outcomes from the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, BRS has targeted a number of ways to better serve minority and unserved/underserved consumers:

- Work with the Bureau's Latino Committee to develop new approaches to working with consumers who are Latino. This committee will approve an Interview Preparedness Curriculum to ensure cultural relevance. Members of the Latino Committee will meet with the Employment Consultants and representatives of the Employment Consultants will attend Latino Committee meetings for regular updates and dialogue.
- BRS will also incorporate into our case management system the ability to translate forms into Spanish, make all new publications available in Spanish, and add required forms on the BRS Intranet available for staff use.

- Staff will continue to receive cross-training on the new Learning Disability guidelines and transition issues to increase employment and postsecondary outcomes for young adults. BRS will implement the Summer Youth Employment Program. Staff will receive training on participation in Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings. BRS will collaborate with the State Department of Education (SDE) and community partners to conduct training and outreach activities with school districts throughout the state. BRS will also collaborate with SDE and community partners to align goals, use a common framework and develop a community of practice for secondary transition.
- To increase employment outcomes for individuals with psychiatric disabilities, BRS will partner with Local Mental Health Authorities and state Mental Health agency to increase the number of employment outcomes and amount of earnings for consumers.
- In order to develop more responsive services for individuals with autism spectrum disorders, BRS will hold three meetings of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Committee. BRS will provide joint staff training for BRS and Department of Developmental Services (DDS) staff on Autism Services.
- To increase employment outcomes for individuals who are deaf, BRS will conduct targeted outreach to employers. BRS will create and disseminate an Interview Preparedness Tip Sheet on Deaf Culture issues.

**If applicable, identify plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the state.**

BRS will develop the capacity of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to meet the needs of BRS consumers in the following ways:

- Develop and implement an evaluation process for existing CRPs.
- Meet quarterly with CRPs in each district.
- Participate in the Job Development Leadership Network.
- Develop and share Distance Learning Modules for CRPs.
- Add Interview Preparedness as a required service in all Community Rehabilitation Provider contracts. To assist CRPs in achieving proficiency, BRS will present training on Interview Preparedness and job development strategies for deaf and Latino populations.
- Increase in the number of providers who can offer services in Spanish.

BRS will also outreach to non-traditional multilingual providers.

**Describe strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators.**

To improve the Bureau's performance on Standards and Indicators with respect to quality, BRS will:

- Continue to use a performance evaluation model that incorporates selected standards and indicators into annual service ratings of employees.
- Ensure that no cases will remain in Status 10 longer than six months without a clear plan of action.
- Identify at least 10 consumers who will write their own Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE).
- Monitor that staff will update case notes every six months in 90% of the cases.
- Ensure that timely Annual Reviews of IPE's are done for all consumers.
- Use the In-Service Training Project to provide customer service training to all staff to improve customer service skills.
- Increase the number of work attachments developed by counselors and Employment Consultants over FFY2012 outcomes.

**Describe strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.**

BRS will review and update Memoranda of Understandings with workforce boards, continue to attend workforce board meetings, and continue to seek a representative from the workforce boards to serve as a member of the State Rehabilitation Council.

**Describe how the agency's strategies will be used to:**

- **achieve 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.**

Along with the strategies mentioned above that address goals in 4.11(c)(1) and offer ways to overcome barriers to equitable access to VR services, BRS also anticipates using I & E funds in FFY 2014 to explore a proposal that may provide opportunities for allocating additional resources toward improving services for the underserved deaf and Latino populations. The expected goal of this project will be geared toward developing strategies and making available resources to assist community providers in effectively serving these populations.

## 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**.

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

**Result:** 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.

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

**Result:** 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 .598 when compared to the state average earnings. Therefore, we passed this Indicator for FFY 2012.

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

**Result:** Indicator 1.6 – Self-support at closure VS self-support at application ( $\geq 53$ ) 45.2%. The bureau failed this Indicator as 45.98% 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.

**Measure:** Number of website hits -

**Result:** 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.

**Measure:** Number of website hits and amount of marketing materials disseminated.

**Result:** 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.

**Measure:** consumer satisfaction-

**Result:** 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.

**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 -

**Result:** 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.

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

**Result:** 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.

**Measure:** Rehabilitation rate for individuals with ethnicity identified as Hispanic.

**Result:** Rehabilitation rate for Latino Consumers for FFY 2012: 52.3% compared to the Rehabilitation Rate for Latino Consumers for FFY 2011: 48.9% . 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.

**Measure:** Number of employment outcomes for individuals referred prior to age 24, as compared to previous year.

**Result:** For FFY 2012, 22.7% of employment outcomes were individuals referred prior to age 24. For FFY 2011, 21.5% of employment outcomes were individuals referred prior to age 24.

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). This consultant 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> (under School to Work), helps staff, consumers, families, and stakeholders conduct 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.

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

**Strategy:** Partner with Local Mental Health Authorities and the state Mental Health agency.

**Measure:** Number of employment outcomes, as compared to previous year.

**Result:** Out of 1,236 successful employment outcomes for FFY 2012, 369 or 30% of the consumers received services due to a primary and/or a secondary psychiatric disability. Compared to FFY 2011, 29% (342 out of 1,171 successful closures) of the consumers received services due to a primary and/or a secondary psychiatric disability.

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

**Result:** 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.

**Measure:** Number of consumers and families participating in the Committee

**Result:** Psychologist met with agency and CRP staff regarding three consumers this year.

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

**Measure:** Number of consumers and families participating in the Committee -

**Result:** The Committee met with 25 families/individuals and, in addition, conducted about 15 case conferences.

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

*Priority areas:*

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

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

**Strategy:** Make consumer-use workstations available in all offices.

**Measure:** Number of people using consumer-use workstations -

**Result:** 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.

**Measure:** Number of video phones available, usage -

**Result:** 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.

**Result:** BRS also has 12 public Video Phones for consumers to use located in the Bridgeport , Danbury, Danielson, Hartford, Manchester, Middletown, New Britain, New Haven, Norwich, Stamford, Torrington, and Waterbury offices.

**Strategy:** Continue to work with Community Rehabilitation Providers on making their services accessible to individuals whose primary language is ASL.

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

**Result:** 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.

**Measure:** Active participation by both BRS and CRPs in the BRS and CRP Communication Task Force established to assist CRPs with improving access to their services for individuals who primary language is ASL. -

**Result:** 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.

**Measure:** Ability to produce all forms in Spanish.

**Result:** 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.

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

**Result:** 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.

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

**Result:** 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 Employment 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

**Measure:** Number of hits to the Spanish forms within the website

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

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

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

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

**Result:** 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.

**Measure:** Number of days between 00 and 02.

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

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

*Priority areas:*

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

**Objective 4.1:** Create partnerships with Businesses.

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

**Measure:** Number of OJTs negotiated.

**Result:** October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012 = 174 OJTs negotiated (previous year 155 OJTs). This represents an increase of approximately 11% of successfully negotiated employer agreements.

**Strategy:** Implement Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs.

**Measure:** Number of awards.

**Result:** Five awards granted to:

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

**Measure:** Number of placements.

**Result:** 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.

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

**Result:** 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 who speak Spanish has also 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.

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

**Result:** 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.

**Result:** 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.

**Measure:** MOA deliverables

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

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

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

DDS, 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 in 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.

❖ **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.

#### ❖ **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 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 PSOS survey.

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

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

## **I. 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. From these loaned devices, 27 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:

- Nine 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;

CTTAP partnered with the State Education Resource Center (SERC) to create a 'how to' manual for schools entitled **“Technology and Transition: Creating and Sustaining an AT Team at the High School Level.”** The manual was developed after two years of assistive technology training and technical assistance provided to one urban high school in Connecticut. The purpose of the manual is to help other high schools and districts throughout Connecticut develop their own AT Team in order to provide effective and consistent AT services to their students with disabilities.

This manual was initially presented at the Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) national assistive technology conference in Orlando, FL, January 2013. It was later used as the basis of a day of training in March of 2013 to four AT teams in Connecticut. Five smaller trainings are scheduled across the state for the 2013-2014 school year.

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.

## **II. 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.

## **III. 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 offered rate differentials and technical assistance to CRPs that wished to expand their capacity to provide services to people who are deaf or Spanish speaking through June 30, 2013.

- 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.

#### **IV. 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 2012.

Of the Standards and Indicators not already listed above for FFY 2012, 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/registry 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.

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

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

### **Program Status**

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (the Bureau) is allocated \$255,000 annually for the Title VI, Part B Funds and expects to expend all of its allocation. The Bureau continues to focus on the quality service delivery system for the Supported Employment Services funding through collaborations with our state and local community rehabilitation service partners for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2012. In previous years, attention has been specific to the areas of community rehabilitation provider (CRP) and vocational rehabilitation counseling staff training; establishing quality standards and minimum requirements of direct service staff; and reviewing the qualifications of the CRP vocational services Program Director. Consumer program participation increased as a result of these initiatives.

### **Transition to Extended Services**

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

### **Coordination and Collaboration**

The Bureau is engaged in facilitating systemic changes in how supported employment services are delivered in the community. The Bureau works with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and other partners to transition consumers from the Title VI, Part B funding to an appropriate ongoing employment support program. The Bureau oversees one of the three state-funded long-term supports programs and in SFY 2012 spent approximately \$1 million in serving VR consumers after VR services were completed. These efforts have led to internal and external improvements in our state system and have built a foundation for a strong Supported Employment service program in this state.

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