

**The Digest of Administrative Reports to the Governor
Department of Rehabilitation Services
Fiscal Year 2012-2013**

At a Glance

Agency: Department of Rehabilitation Services

Commissioner: Amy L. Porter

Established: 2011

Statutory Authority: Public Act 11-44

Central Office: 25 Sigourney Street, Hartford, Connecticut, 06106

Web address: www.ct.gov/dors

Total employees: 440

Total expenditures: \$75,000,000 with approximately 70% federal and 30% state funding.

Mission

The Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services provides a range of services to help Connecticut citizens with disabilities live independently and work competitively.

Statutory Responsibility

The primary customers of the agency are individuals with disabilities, and in our employment-based programs, we also have business/employers as a dual customer. The Department of Rehabilitation Services provides a wide range of services to individuals with disabilities, children, families, and individuals who need assistance in maintaining or achieving their full potential for self-direction, self-reliance and independent living.

The agency structure for SFY2013 included three major divisions:

1. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
2. The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind
3. The Bureau of Organizational Support

Our programs, policies and practices are designed to promote employment, independence, equal access, and self-sufficiency.

Public Service

While each program has its own legislative requirements and program effectiveness standards, the agency as a whole focuses on continuous improvement. For our employment programs (Vocational Rehabilitation, Workers Rehabilitation), the measures of success center on employment wages and measures of self-sufficiency. For our Disability Determination Services

program, the metrics center on processing time and accuracy, and for our Interpreting Unit, we focus on the number of requests we were able to fulfill.

As a new agency, we continue to work toward building a full complement of metrics to share in this annual report.

Significant Achievements for Fiscal Years 2012 – 2013

Agency accomplishments will be reported here by program, organized around the three agency Bureaus: the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind, and Bureau of Organizational Support.

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (www.ct.gov/brs) strives to create opportunities that enable individuals with significant disabilities to work competitively and live independently. Staff works to provide individualized services, develop effective partnerships, and share sufficient information so that consumers and their families may make informed choices about the rehabilitation process and employment options.

The Bureau hosts a number of programs:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- Connect-Ability
- Connect to Work Project
- CT Tech Act Project
- Employment Opportunities Program
- Disability Determination Services
- Independent Living Program
- Driver Training Program for Individuals with Disabilities

Highlights from each of these programs are included below.

Vocational Rehabilitation:

BRS administers the Title I Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Title VI Supported Employment (SE) programs of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Consumers who have significant disabilities receive individual assistance in preparing for, finding, or keeping a job. BRS receives this federal funding from the Rehabilitation Services Administration, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, at the [U.S. Department of Education](http://www.ed.gov).

BRS assisted 8,896 consumers in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2012. BRS assistance in the amount of approximately \$10.7 million helped these consumers to prepare for employment opportunities. These expenditures covered a broad range of services including community rehabilitation providers; adaptive technology like home and vehicle modifications, prosthetics and assisted listening devices; programs and supplies to complete training; tuition, fees, and books needed for college education; evaluations and treatments for physical, psychological, and psychiatric conditions; and other services needed to maintain progress toward individual goals. BRS assistance helped 1,236 individuals with disabilities to enter or maintain competitive employment.

In addition to assisting consumers to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment, BRS also assists employers seeking qualified candidates for employment. BRS led several efforts to improve the process of helping consumers find work or to improve the climate, in which consumers interacted with employers and community rehabilitation providers, while seeking training and employment. Several projects and programs used in that effort are described below.

The BRS **Employment Division** has continued with the Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs (ISTPP) to work closely with employers to find the best candidates for jobs. ISTPPs are tuition-based workforce development programs that provide job seekers with disabilities the skills needed for employment in a particular profession or type of business. BRS is currently engaged in ISTPPs with the following employers:

- CVS Retail (Western CT Stores)
- HomeGoods Distribution Center (Bloomfield, CT)
- Lowes Distribution Center (Plainfield, CT)
- Mohegan Sun (Uncasville, CT)
- Walgreens Distribution Center (Windsor, CT)
- Walgreens Retail (Statewide Stores).

To date 206 consumers have gone through the trainings and 148 have received competitive employment as a result of this initiative.

While our consumers seek help to prepare for, find or maintain employment, some of them also become employers when they hire **Personal Care Attendants** (PCA) to assist them in their daily activities. In order to ensure these consumer/employers meet all applicable state and federal requirements, BRS contracted with Allied Community Resources to provide fiduciary services and training to consumers who received funding for Personal Assistance Services (PAS) as part of their Individualized Plan for Employment. Consumers who employ PCAs will be better equipped in their dual role as employers.

In vocational rehabilitation, the overall goal is to provide assistance to job seekers as they prepare for employment, apply for new employment, or to maintain the jobs they already have. In an effort to ensure the bureau is providing the best services possible, BRS conducted an internal analysis of available services, the way they are administered to consumers and the impact these services have on consumers. The **Comprehensive Statewide Needs Analysis** (CSNA) was conducted according to guidelines from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to identify the vocational rehabilitation (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 not been served or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program; and
- Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.

BRS also assessed the need to improve the community rehabilitation programs within the state. Community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) are contracted to provide VR services to our

consumers. The components of this needs assessment included five targeted areas: Consumers, CRPs, VR Counselors, Key Informants and a section of the 2011 Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) Needs Assessment related to vocational rehabilitation. The CSNA was conducted over a three-year period; results were published April 2013. A CSNA Summary is available at <http://www.ct.gov/brs/lib/brs/pdfs/2013brscsnareport.pdf>.

Connect-Ability:

Connect-Ability continues to maintain a technical assistance center. Initial funding was provided by the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and strives to reduce barriers to employment by creating a strong competitive employment infrastructure. Staff assists key stakeholders (job-seekers, employers, state agencies, and disability advocates) in navigating Connecticut's employment system for job-seekers and employees with disabilities. The grant ended on December 31, 2012 with the following SFY2013 accomplishments:

- Staff responded to 250 calls for technical assistance
- 211 United Way received 1,350 Med Connect inquiries
- 20,500 unique visitors sought information from the website.
- Connect-Ability collaborated with 20 employers to participate in **National Disability Mentoring Day**, a statewide initiative that provides workplace skills and experiences to students and jobseekers with disabilities. 156 students participated in activities such as mock interviews, company tours, and company overviews.
- Distance Learning Initiative, a free online training resource for individuals with disabilities, family members, educators, and employers. As of July 2013, 49 training modules have been created and 1170 users have registered for the trainings.
- Connect-Ability partnered with the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT) to host the annual legislative transportation forum at the State Capitol.

Connect-Ability provided transportation information and referrals to state agencies, individuals and community based organizations and collaborated with LEARN's Easter Seals Project Action Accessible Transportation Coalition Initiative for Students in Transition and Public Transportation to improve access to public transportation for people with disabilities in Southeastern, Connecticut. The Special Education Department at LEARN was among ten communities throughout the U.S. selected to participate in the Accessible Transportation Coalitions Initiative offered by Easter Seals Project ACTION (ESPA). LEARN's Southeastern region was chosen through a competitive application process in which a commitment to improving accessibility had to be expressed.

Connect to Work Project:

The **Connect-to-Work Project** within BRS provides a single access point for information about the impact of wages on federal and state benefits. Benefits specialists provide comprehensive benefits analysis summaries to help people with disabilities maximize income by working and using federal, state and community resources appropriately to enable sustained employment and

increased self-sufficiency. Project staff counsel individuals as well as host numerous workshops for Social Security beneficiaries and professional staff who serve them.

As of July 1, 2012, Social Security discontinued all funding under the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program (WIPA). Our major source of funding, Connecticut's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), had also ended on December 31, 2012. Due to the loss of both of these funding sources, benefits counseling was not offered to non BRS consumers. Recently other funding sources located through MOU's with Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and Department of Developmental Services (DDS) allowed BRS to continue to provide benefits counseling services to a broader population. The MOU's have been successful and along with support from our the Vocational Rehabilitation programs within DORS, we have been able to provide needed counseling services. As of August 1, 2013, Social Security has reinstated WIPA which will also help to support our project. This new round of funding will be available to us for two years. Beyond the stated two years, Congress will need to authorize a new benefits counseling program.

CT Tech Act Project (CTTAP):

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. Connecticut Tech Act Project services include:

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

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

The Connecticut Tech Act Project also operates the AT Device Loan Program for BRS consumers. 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 determine if the AT device will remove barriers and increase independence for the consumer as they perform their job duties and to make an informed decision about the device.

The Connecticut Tech Act Project was selected as a certified program to offer equipment distribution to Connecticut residents who are Deaf and Blind through the FCC National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program. In FY 2012, 36 consumers received services through this program.

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

- 10 AT Loans were approved, for a total of \$82,596; 4 loans were for vehicle modifications, 1 for seating and positioning, 1 for environmental adaptations and 4 for hearing devices.
- 958 devices were recycled/refurbished
- 224 devices were loaned to all CTTAP consumers
- 405 devices demonstrations for a total of 705 individuals.
- 3570 individuals participated in training events;
- Public awareness activities include printed materials, such as newsletters, brochures, postcards; the CTTAP website; the CTTAP's page on Facebook and radio and/or TV spots, reaching approximately 431,170 individuals;
- The CTTAP Program Director continues to act in the role of Assistive Technology Consultant to VR counselors and consumers and participates on the BRS Case Conferencing Team to provide guidance around AT needs for VR consumers

Employment Opportunities Program (EOP):

The Employment Opportunities Program (Conn. Gen. Stat. §17b-666 and implementing regulations) serves persons with the most severe disabilities who would be unable to maintain employment without ongoing support services. Because of the severity of the disability of participants, it is unlikely that they would be accessing generic employment resources. In addition, services under the program do not generally commence until the individual has been on the job for a period of time and initial intensive training completed. In order to be eligible, a person must be determined to require support services as long as he/she will be employed. Therefore, funds must be allotted for each participant on an annual basis if the person is to remain employed. Virtually all participants are referred to this program by BRS staff. Employment Opportunities funding is used in tandem with other BRS services.

The Program currently supports 269 individuals in employment and another 122 are approved to be supported when they become employed successfully.

Independent Living:

Through the five **Centers for Independent Living (CIL)** --the Center for Disability Rights, West Haven; Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut, Norwich; Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County, Stratford; Independence Northwest, Naugatuck; and Independence Unlimited, Hartford -- individuals with disabilities have access to four core independent living services: advocacy, information & referral, peer counseling, and independent living skills training.

Some specific highlights from this state fiscal year include the following:

- Conducted Emergency Preparedness training for the five Independent Living Centers and other partners. Developed a new relationship with FEMA to address issues related to Hurricane Sandy.
- Developed a coalition of consumers and providers regarding the accessible taxi initiative resulting in 140 accessible MV-1 taxi cabs in the greater Hartford and New Haven communities.

- Independence Unlimited, one of the five independent living centers based in Hartford was successful in getting Public Act 10-56 passed; An Act concerning Visit Able Housing. The goal of Visit-Ability is to increase community inclusion for people with disabilities by providing changes for new construction: one no-step entrance, wider doors and hallways, and an accessible bath on the main floor.

Driver Training for People with Disabilities:

The Driver Training Program for People with Disabilities provides training services to any qualified permanent Connecticut resident who requires special equipment in order to operate a motor vehicle. Vehicles are equipped with the following equipment:

- Push/Rock Hand Control for operation of Gas and Brake pedals;
- Spinner Knob Steering Control;
- Left Foot Accelerator;
- Right Hand Turn Signal Lever;
- Instructor's Dual Brake;
- Automatic Transmission; and
- Power Steering, Brakes, Seats, Windows and Mirrors.

Disability Determination Services:

Disability Determination Services (DDS) makes disability and blindness determinations on behalf of the Social Security Administration for individuals living in Connecticut. The DDS processed approximately 43,000 client applications for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income during State FY 2013. The DDS ranks as one of the highest nationally in productivity, quality, and public service. Additionally, the DDS has been a leader in electronic claims processing, most notably in requesting and receiving electronic medical records related to disability claims. Sixty-six percent of all records are received via secure electronic transmission, allowing for disability claims to be processed more quickly and efficiently.

The DDS continues to collaborate with community partners through the SSI/SSDI Outreach Access and Recovery (SOAR) program for people who are homeless in Connecticut. DDS staff works with treatment providers throughout Connecticut to increase access to SSI/SSDI income for people with mental illness who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. This initiative has resulted in improved public service to this population.

DDS continued the Compassionate Allowance initiative and Quick Disability Determination Unit to expedite claims processing for applicants with the most severe disabilities. Claims that are referred to this unit by predictive model selection average a 5 - 10 day processing timeframe.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Counseling Unit:

The Counseling Unit provides individual, family and group counseling, consultation services and outreach and advocacy to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. As there are only two full time licensed professional counselors employed by the agency, the counselors have developed collaborations with other state and local community agencies to create a team approach to working with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing that includes, but is not limited to employment support, case management, crisis management, and psychiatric and psychological services.

Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind

The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) is the state's lead program for the coordination and provision of services to Connecticut residents who are legally blind. Founded in 1893, BESB was among the first state programs in the nation for people who are blind and that proud heritage is reflected in an unsurpassed dedication to public service.

BESB has four separate service units which provide a full range of services to clients of all ages who are legally blind:

1. The Adult Services Unit serves as the central intake for clients and provides independent living training to adults.
2. The Children's Services Unit provides Braille instruction and support to children who are blind or have visual impairments and professional and technical assistance to school districts.
3. The Vocational Rehabilitation Unit helps adults who are legally blind obtain and retain employment.
4. The Business Enterprise Unit offers entrepreneurial opportunities to people who are blind.

The Bureau also includes the Workers' Rehabilitation Program that assists individuals with work-related injuries to return to the workforce.

BESB operates under the authority of Chapter 174 of the Connecticut General Statutes and maintains a confidential registry of people who are blind in Connecticut as required by statute. BESB provides comprehensive independent living services, adaptive aids and devices and volunteer supports, among other rehabilitative services, to adults who are legally blind or deaf-blind and children who are visually impaired, legally blind or deaf-blind, with a goal of maximizing independence and community inclusion. Under the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-295, the Bureau provides to any school district upon written request the services of Teachers of the Visually Impaired to address the vision-related developmental needs of students who are blind, deaf-blind or visually impaired.

For fiscal year 2013, the client registry for the Bureau increased by 2%, now includes 10,991 Connecticut residents. A total of 671 newly blind individuals were added to the registry, 451 of whom, or two thirds, were 65 or older. Of that total number of new clients, 85 were children, placing the total number of children on the registry at 1,080.

In fiscal year 2013 the Bureau provided over 26,000 hours of direct rehabilitative services to our clients, including crucial educational assistance to children, career assistance to adults and transition-age youth, and improvements in independent living to clients of all ages. Additionally, the bureau's staff provided over 6,300 hours of outreach, consultation and public education services to educators, community providers, employers and vending locations in fiscal year 2013.

The Bureau provided nearly 4,100 hours of direct Orientation and Mobility services to teach safe travel techniques to children and adults, enabling clients to access their communities and

participate in education and employment. In addition, the Bureau provided over 2,200 hours of Rehabilitation Teaching services – a 9.4% increase over last year - to increase safety and independence in daily living tasks to children and adults. BESB Social Workers provided over 2,800 hours of independent living services – an increase of over 18 percent - including adjustment to blindness counseling and referrals to community providers. In collaboration with the National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut (NFB-CT) and the Connecticut Radio Information System (CRIS), services through NFB Newslines continued, with more than 1,000 subscribers gaining access to state and national newspapers through touchtone telephones. Subscribers increased their use of NFB Newslines by accessing it over 26,000 times during the year, with almost 7,300 hours of news information delivered.

Entrepreneurial Employment:

Opportunities for entrepreneurial employment in food service and retail operations at locations such as courthouses, government office buildings, community colleges, postal facilities and such popular tourist locations as Hammonasset Beach, Rocky Neck Beach and Gillette's Castle are provided through the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). This program is administered under both the federal Randolph-Sheppard Act and Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-303. The Business Enterprise Program operates primarily with income derived from commissions on vending machine sales at federal, state and municipal buildings and properties throughout Connecticut. Through these commissions, in combination with federal funding, the program funds the opening of new locations and renovations to existing locations. In addition, funding from vending machine commissions is utilized to cover the cost of medical benefits for these entrepreneurs who are blind. Participants of the program receive training and support services through Field Representatives from the agency. In total, 5,200 hours of training and support were provided during fiscal year 2013. There were 47 entrepreneurs who participated in the program during the past federal fiscal year. These entrepreneurs provided employment to 77 individuals - 19.5 percent of whom also had disabilities. Combined gross sales for these business ventures surpassed \$5.0 million. Despite the challenging economy, the combined total net income of these 47 entrepreneurs exceeded \$1.2 million.

Teachers for Individuals with Visual Impairments:

BESB provided the services of its own Teachers of the Visually Impaired to 114 school districts across the state, at no cost to cities and towns, for direct instruction and consultation services to maximize the participation of children who are blind or visually impaired in public education. Over 7,600 hours of educational assistance were provided to students served by the agency in fiscal year 2013. Of that number, nearly 3,800 hours of direct Braille instruction were delivered. For the 17 school districts that directly hired or contracted for their own Teachers of the Visually Impaired, the program provided over \$1 million in funding reimbursements. Statewide, BESB served a total of 929 school-age students across Connecticut, 99 of whom use Braille as a primary or secondary reading mode. In addition, BESB served 62 children who are under the age of three and therefore not yet served by any school district.

Employment Outcomes:

Through the provision of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services, authorized under Title I and Title 6, Part B of the federal Rehabilitation Act, as amended, for the past federal fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, 111 individuals achieved successful employment outcomes.

Cumulative annualized earnings for all vocational rehabilitation clients exceeded \$3.1 million, a 23% increase over 2011 in total client earnings. The Vocational Rehabilitation unit served 969 participants, with 173 new applications for services. Vocational Rehabilitation staff delivered over 1,000 hours of employer outreach services in state fiscal year 2013. In addition, the VR unit provided over 2,000 hours of direct vocational counseling services to clients served in the program, an increase of 8.7% over 2012. Transition school-to-work initiatives to prepare high school students for employment and post-secondary education included 8 summer programs in state fiscal year 2012, providing 118 opportunities in activities such as career exposure, internships, mentoring, independent living skill development and leadership training.

Workers' Rehabilitation Services:

Workers' Rehabilitation Services provides training, counseling and job placement assistance to individuals whose work-related injuries preclude them from performing their customary or most recent work. In fiscal year 2013, the Program served 2,050 clients, a 3.9% increase over the previous year. There were 1,016 new applications for services and 204 rehabilitation plans developed. Through the efforts of the Program, 345 clients returned to the labor force, an increase of nearly 10% in the number of successful outcomes.

BESB Improvements and Achievements 2012-13:

- Camp Abilities, a collaborative effort with Channel 3 Kids Camp, served 33 students with visual impairments in its third year. Six of our students developed leadership skills while serving as Counselors in Training. Activities included swimming, track & field, goal ball, hiking, archery, beep baseball and a high ropes challenge course. New sports this year included Judo and tandem bicycling.
- Working in collaboration with the Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Bureau was able to obtain an additional \$2.4 million of vocational funding from the federal government this past year, a very significant increase to our federal funding. These dollars enabled the Bureau to continue its long-standing practice of accepting and serving all eligible clients for vocational services. In addition, this allotment allowed the Bureau to maintain comprehensive services for our Business Enterprise Program entrepreneurs.
- For the second year in a row, BESB was awarded a United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) grant for a Fitness Challenge program to promote physical fitness for youth with vision impairments. The \$3,000 grant was used to support a variety of fitness-related activities for 20 students throughout the year. One of our students was selected to participate in the national USABA Challenge in Colorado Springs, CO in June of 2013.
- Individuals and organizations provided over 16,000 volunteer services hours to BESB and its clients in fiscal year 2013. Volunteers assisted clients with such daily living activities as grocery shopping and reading mail and also helped the Bureau with transcribing books and materials into Braille. With the help and hard work of BESB home-typist volunteers, the Bureau added 204 popular books and novels to our electronic files for students to download into Braille and large print. The estimated total value of these volunteer hours to clients and the state exceeded \$350,000.

- Over 2,100 hours of specialized adaptive technology services were provided to enable BESB clients of all ages to access education, employment and independent living activities in fiscal year 2013 with the use of speech, Braille and large font devices.
- Continuing financial support for the Business Enterprise Program was achieved through the placement and maintenance of 1,736 vending machines at 874 public locations. The number of machines grew by 5.4% owing, in large part, to a new formalized partnership between the Bureau and the United States Postal Service. This partnership increased the number of BESB vending locations and machines in postal facilities across the state. Overall customer satisfaction with the level of vending machine services remains high; this last year, surveys showed a satisfaction rate of 94%.
- In fiscal year 2013, the Children’s Services Braille Unit purchased 129 Braille books and 467 large print books for school districts in Connecticut to provide to students who are blind or have visual impairments. In addition to purchasing these materials, the Braille Unit was able to utilize Federal Quota funds to provide an additional 19 Braille books and 148 large print books. The Bureau’s in-house Braille Library loaned 76 Braille books and 321 large print books to school districts for students to use in the classroom. The Braille Library now contains over 66,000 volumes of Braille and large print books, which are available to students in every school district in Connecticut.
- Braille Unit volunteers, along with inmates who are certified Braille transcriptionists at Cheshire Correctional provided 113 Braille books to school districts for use by students who are blind. This combined effort enabled the program and state to save over \$150,000.
- Through the provision of independent living services such as travel training, access to technology, rehabilitation teaching and low vision magnification, 378 clients achieved and maintained independence within their homes and communities – an increase of over 14% in one year.
- The advent of silent and near-silent automobiles has created additional challenges for people with blindness who often rely on auditory cues at street crossings. In response to growing local and national concern about hybrid and other “quiet” cars, the Bureau’s Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Instructors have implemented new training techniques with both children and adult travelers to better prepare them for identifying and responding to the challenges these vehicles cause at street crossings. These methods are now included in one-on-one instruction, as well as at the Bureau’s Skills for Life program for children and in our summer camps.
- The Braille Unit provided weekly Braille menus for clients living in nursing homes and transcribed various instruction manuals for clients who use Braille. The Braille Unit has also assisted sister state agencies by converting materials into Braille whenever needed and also supplied The Artisan’s Center in Hartford with their monthly newsletter in Braille.

- Results of an independent client satisfaction survey conducted by the Center for Public Policy and Social Research found that Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients remain very satisfied with the unit's services. Ninety-four percent of respondents would recommend BESB's Vocational Rehabilitation services to a friend.
- The Adult Services unit undertook more than 60 outreach activities, including training public transit bus drivers, transition coordinators for Money Follows the Person and staff in group homes, congregate living, mental health and skilled nursing facilities. Educational outreach presentations were also made at seminars, health fairs and low vision support groups.
- BESB organized and conducted 12 full days of training throughout the year for school district classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, Birth-to-Three personnel, and preschool teachers, teachers of the visually impaired and other service providers who work with students who are blind, visually impaired or deaf-blind. A total of 330 professionals and paraprofessionals attended these trainings, increasing their understanding of visual impairments and learning strategies and techniques for working with children from birth through high school completion. In addition, the Children's Services division was able to meet 100% of Connecticut school district needs for Braille and large print materials.

Bureau of Organizational Support

The consolidation of programs created opportunities for the creation of a centralized business services unit to support all of the Department's programs. DORS has been able to assume full responsibility for all fiscal functions, and we are also supporting the State Department on Aging's fiscal functions.

Interpreting Unit:

The agency offers certified interpreting services for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing in situations involving the person's legal and constitutional rights, health, safety, employment and educational opportunities. Due to the volume of assignments and the corresponding invoicing functions, the Interpreting Unit sits within the Bureau of Organizational Support. Currently, 59 percent of these services support other state agencies in working with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Provision of these services also ensures multiple state agencies to be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and provides deaf and hard of hearing citizens of Connecticut with equal access to state services.

Besides daily requests from the Judicial Department, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Department of Children and Families, to name a few, the Interpreting Department also responds routinely to police and hospital emergencies on nights and weekends. This department is also the sole provider of interpreting services for the state university and community college educational systems. All interpreting services rendered by this department are reimbursable; those monies supplement the overall agency budget.

The Interpreting Unit also maintains an updated statewide registry of interpreters for the deaf. This requires monitoring the education and certification of interpreters working for

compensation in the State of Connecticut, as per Conn. Gen. Statute Sec. 46(a)-33(a). The names of the interpreters who are qualified to work in the state are posted on the agency's website.

Additional Organizational Components

Human Resources Division:

Effective July 1, 2013 the agency is now responsible for its own administrative functions including human resources. The Human Resources Division is responsible for providing technical guidance and support for all the employees of the agency. Staff are involved in addressing issues which impact human resource management for the agency as a whole, through coordination of policy issues, involvement in labor relations activity and, in general, with the objective of ensuring that the quality of human resource service throughout the department remains consistent. Functions of the Human Resource Division include: providing general personnel services to all staff; coordination and administration of information related to personnel data collection; the development and dissemination of agency policies and procedures; participation in labor relations activities with respect to contract administration and negotiation, and the grievance process; administration of medical insurance and other benefits; and implementation of health and safety programs and workers' compensation. The Payroll Unit, as part of this division, is responsible for processing payroll and benefits in accordance with bargaining unit contracts and State Personnel Regulations.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

Affirmative Action:

The Department of Rehabilitation Services is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Department does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability (including, but not limited to, intellectual disability, past or present history of mental disorder, physical disability or learning disability), genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal nondiscrimination laws.

The Department of Rehabilitation Services does not unlawfully discriminate in employment and licensing against qualified persons with a prior criminal conviction. Under the direction of the Commissioner, the agency is responsible for ensuring compliance with a wide variety of federal and state laws and department policies that address equal employment and education. Activities related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act include investigating grievances as well as determining and documenting reasonable accommodations, and visiting work sites. The agency also investigates complaints in the areas of employment practice, sexual harassment, disability, and age/sex under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

During this reporting period, the Department hired 39 employees — Seven white males, sixteen white females, one black male, seven black females, one Hispanic male, five Hispanic females, one other male, and one other female. Of the 39 hires, the Department hired 14 goal candidates that consisted of four white males, one white female, zero black males, one black female, one Hispanic male, five Hispanic females, one other male, and one other female.