



**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
*Office of the Director*

June 26, 2008

United States Department of Education  
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services  
Attention: Pedro Romero  
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W. PCP Room 5144  
Washington, DC 20202-2800

Re: Transmittal of the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services Annual State Plan FY2009 Update for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program under Title I, Section 101(a) and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program under Title VI, Section 625 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended (the Act).

Dear Mr. Romero:

The purpose of this correspondence is to submit for approval the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services Annual State Plan FY2009 updates for the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the State Plan for Supported Employment. The State Rehabilitation Council assisted the Designated State Unit (DSU) in the development of the State Plan update. Moreover, the DSU conducted a public meeting to provide the opportunity for individuals with disabilities to comment on the plan; and actively consulted with the Client Assistance Program.

Rhode Island has selected the option of submitting a separate "stand alone" plan under Section 112 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). The Annual Update to the State Plan is approved as of October 1, 2008.

The enclosed required narrative attachment and assurances are included with this letter.

**Attachment 4.2 (c):** Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations

**Attachment 4.8(b):** Cooperation and Coordination with Other Agencies and Other Entities

- (1) Cooperation with Agencies that Are Not in the Statewide Workforce Investment System and with Other Entities
- (2) Coordination with Education Officials
- (3) Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-profit Vocational Rehabilitation Service Providers
- (4) Evidence of Collaboration Regarding Supported Employment Services and Extended Services

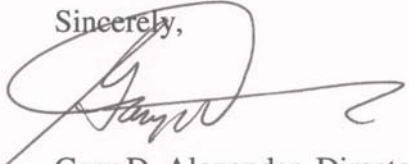
**Attachment 4.10:** Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

**Attachment 4.11:** Assessments; Estimates; Goals and Priorities; Strategies; and Progress Reports

- (a): Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities and Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs
  - (b): Annual Estimates of Individuals to Be Served and Costs of Services
  - (c)(1): State's Goals and Priorities
  - (c)(3): Order of Selection
  - (c)(4): Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds
  - (d): State's Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities
  - (e)(2): Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities
- Attachment 6.3:** Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

The State Plan and its Supplement are not subject to the State Single Point of Contact review process.

If you should have any questions or require additional information, please contact Stephen J. Brunero, Acting Administrator, Office of Rehabilitation Services at (401) 421-7005 ext. 354. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
  
Gary D. Alexander, Director

## 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	PR/AWARD NUMBER AND / OR PROJECT NAME
Rhode Island Department of Human Services Office of Rehabilitation Services	Supported Employment Services Program H187A080059B
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	
Gary D. Alexander, Director	
SIGNATURE	DATE
	June 25, 2008

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

NAME OF APPLICANT	PR/AWARD NUMBER AND / OR PROJECT NAME
Rhode Island Department of Human Services Office of Rehabilitation Services	Vocational Rehabilitation – Basic Support H126A080058
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	
Gary D. Alexander, Director	
SIGNATURE	DATE
	June 25, 2008

**STATE PLAN FOR THE STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES PROGRAM  
AND  
STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT FOR THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM**

STATE:  Rhode Island

AGENCY:  Office of Rehabilitation Services


AGENCY TYPE: GENERAL \_\_\_\_\_ BLIND \_\_\_\_\_ COMBINED  X

**SECTION 1: STATE CERTIFICATIONS**

- 1.1 The **Office of Rehabilitation Services** (name of designated state agency or designated state unit) is authorized to submit this State Plan under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended<sup>1</sup> and its supplement under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act<sup>2</sup>.
- 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 **Department of Human Services** (name of the designated state agency)<sup>3</sup> agrees to operate and administer the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program in accordance with the provisions of this State Plan<sup>4</sup>, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations<sup>5</sup>, 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<sup>6</sup>, the Rehabilitation Act and all applicable regulations<sup>7</sup>, 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.
- 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.
- 1.5 The state legally may carry out each provision of the State Plan and its supplement.
- 1.6 All provisions of the State Plan and its supplement are consistent with state law.
- 1.7 The **Director, Department of Human Services** (title of state officer) has the authority under state law to receive, hold and disburse federal funds made available under this State Plan and its supplement.

1.8 The **Director, Department of Human Services** (title of state officer) has the authority to submit this State Plan for vocational rehabilitation services and the State Plan supplement for supported employment services.

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

 _____ (Signature) June 26, 2008 _____ (Date)	 _____ Gary D. Alexander (Typed Name of Signatory)  _____ Director (Title)
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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

<sup>3</sup> All references in this plan to "designated state agency" or to "the state agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> Applicable regulations include the EDGAR citations in footnote 5, 34 CFR Part 361, and 34 CFR Part 363.

**SECTION 2: PUBLIC COMMENT ON STATE PLAN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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

**(a) Conduct of public meetings.**

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

**(b) Notice requirements.**

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

**(c) Special consultation requirements.**

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

**SECTION 3: SUBMISSION OF THE STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT**

- 3.1 Submission and revisions of the State Plan and its supplement.** (Sections 101(a)(1), (23) and 625(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act; Section 501 of the Workforce Investment Act; 34 CFR 76.140; 361.10(e), (f), and (g); and 363.10)
- (a) The state submits to the commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration the State Plan and its supplement on the same date that the state submits either a State Plan under Section 112 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 or a state unified plan under Section 501 of that Rehabilitation Act.
  - (b) The state submits only those policies, procedures or descriptions required under this State Plan and its supplement that have not been previously submitted to and approved by the commissioner.
  - (c) The state submits to the commissioner, at such time and in such manner as the commissioner determines to be appropriate, reports containing annual updates of the information relating to the:
    - (1) comprehensive system of personnel development;
    - (2) assessments, estimates, goals and priorities, and reports of progress;
    - (3) innovation and expansion activities; and
    - (4) other updates of information required under Title I, Part B, or Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act that are requested by the commissioner.
  - (d) The State Plan and its supplement are in effect subject to the submission of modifications the state determines to be necessary or the commissioner requires based on a change in state policy, a change in federal law, including regulations, an interpretation of the Rehabilitation Act by a federal court or the highest court of the state, or a finding by the commissioner of state noncompliance with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361 or 34 CFR 363.
- 3.2 Supported Employment State Plan supplement.** (Sections 101(a)(22) and 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.34 and 363.10)
- (a) The state has an acceptable plan for carrying out Part B, of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act that provides for the use of funds under that part to supplement funds made available under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the cost of services leading to supported employment.
  - (b) The Supported Employment State Plan, including any needed annual revisions, is submitted as a supplement to the State Plan.

**SECTION 4: ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE PLAN**

- 4.1 Designated state agency and designated state unit.** (Section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.13(a) and (b))
- (a) **Designated state agency.**
- (1) There is a state agency designated as the sole state agency to administer the State Plan or to supervise its administration in a political subdivision of the state by a sole local agency.
- (2) The designated state agency is:
- (A)        a state agency that is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities; or
- (B)   x   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   Office of Rehabilitation Services  .

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

The State Plan must contain one of the following assurances.

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

**or**

- (b)  X  The state has established a State Rehabilitation Council that meets the criteria set forth in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.17 and the designated state unit:
- (1) jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council develops, agrees to and reviews annually state goals and priorities and jointly submits to the commissioner annual reports of progress in accordance with the provisions of Section 101(a)(15) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.29 and subsection 4.11 of this State Plan;
  - (2) regularly consults with the State Rehabilitation Council regarding the development, implementation and revision of state policies and procedures of general applicability pertaining to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services;
  - (3) includes in the State Plan and in any revision to the State Plan a summary of input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including recommendations from the annual report of the council described in Section 105(c)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(5), the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction described in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4), and other reports prepared by the council and the response of the designated state unit to the input and recommendations, including explanations for rejecting any input or recommendation; and
  - (4) transmits to the council:

- (A) all plans, reports and other information required under 34 CFR 361 to be submitted to the commissioner;
- (B) all policies and information on all practices and procedures of general applicability provided to or used by rehabilitation personnel in carrying out this State Plan and its supplement; and
- (C) copies of due process hearing decisions issued under 34 CFR 361.57, which are transmitted in such a manner as to ensure that the identity of the participants in the hearings is kept confidential.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The State Plan provides for the state agency to share funding and administrative responsibility with another state agency or local public agency to carry out a joint program to provide services to individuals with disabilities. **Yes**   **No**  X   
**If "Yes"**, the designated state agency submits to the commissioner for approval a plan that describes its shared funding and administrative arrangement. The plan must include:

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

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

- (a) Services provided under the State Plan are available in all political subdivisions of the state.
- (b) The state unit may provide services in one or more political subdivisions of the state that increase services or expand the scope of services that are available statewide under this State Plan if the:
  - (1) nonfederal share of the cost of these services is met from funds provided by a local public agency, including funds contributed to a local public agency by a private agency, organization or individual;
  - (2) services are likely to promote the vocational rehabilitation of substantially larger numbers of individuals with disabilities or of individuals with disabilities with particular types of impairments; and
  - (3) state, for purposes other than the establishment of a community rehabilitation program or the construction of a particular facility for community rehabilitation program purposes, requests in **Attachment 4.7(b)(3)** a waiver of the statewideness requirement in accordance with the following requirements:
    - (A) identification of the types of services to be provided;
    - (B) written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the state unit the nonfederal share of funds;

- (C) written assurance that state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect; and
  - (D) written assurance that all other State Plan requirements, including a state's order of selection, will apply to all services approved under the waiver.
- (c) Contributions, consistent with the requirements of 34 CFR 361.60(b)(3)(ii), by private entities of earmarked funds for particular geographic areas within the state may be used as part of the nonfederal share without the state requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement provided that the state notifies the commissioner that it cannot provide the full nonfederal share without using the earmarked funds.

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

- (a) **Cooperative agreements with other components of statewide work force investment system.**  
The designated state agency or the designated state unit has cooperative agreements with other entities that are components of the statewide work force investment system and replicates those agreements at the local level between individual offices of the designated state unit and local entities carrying out the One-Stop service delivery system or other activities through the statewide work force investment system.
- (b) **Cooperation and coordination with other agencies and entities.**  
**Attachment 4.8(b) (1)-(4)** describes the designated state agency's:
- (1) cooperation with and use of the services and facilities of the federal, state, and local agencies and programs, including programs carried out by the undersecretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture and state use contracting programs, to the extent that those agencies and programs are not carrying out activities through the statewide work force investment system;
  - (2) coordination, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 4.8(c) of this section, with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services;
  - (3) establishment of cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.10(b) of the State Plan; and,
  - (4) efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and entities with respect to the provision of supported employment and extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with the requirements of subsection 6.5 of the supplement to this State Plan.

(c) **Coordination with education officials.**

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

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

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

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

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

Yes    No X

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

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

(a) **In general.**

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

(b) **Employment of individuals with disabilities.**

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

(c) **Facilities.**

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

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

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

**(a) Data system on personnel and personnel development.**

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

**(1) Qualified personnel needs.**

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

**(2) Personnel development.**

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

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

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

**(c) Personnel standards.**

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

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

(d) **Staff development.**

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

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

(e) **Personnel to address individual communication needs.**

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

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

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

**4.11. Statewide assessment; annual estimates; annual state goals and priorities; strategies; and progress reports.** (Sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2) and 625(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.17(h)(2), .29, and 363.11(b))

(a) **Comprehensive statewide assessment.**

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

The assessment describes:

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

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

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

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

(b) **Annual estimates.**

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

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

- (3) costs of the services described in subparagraph (b)(1), including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection, the service costs for each priority category within the order.
- (c) **Goals and priorities.**
- (1) **Attachment 4.11(c)(1)** identifies the goals and priorities of the state that are jointly developed or revised, as applicable, with and agreed to by the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council, in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.
- (2) The designated state agency submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding any revisions in the goals and priorities for any year the state revises the goals and priorities.
- (3) **Order of selection.**  
If the state agency implements an order of selection, consistent with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of the State Plan, **Attachment 4.11(c)(3):**
- (A) shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
- (B) provides a justification for the order; and
- (C) identifies the service and outcome goals, and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
- (4) **Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds.**  
**Attachment 4.11(c)(4)** specifies, consistent with subsection 6.4 of the State Plan supplement, the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.
- (d) **Strategies.**
- (1) **Attachment 4.11(d)** describes the strategies, including:
- (A) the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities, including how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to those individuals at each stage of the rehabilitation process and how those services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis;
- (B) outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities in accordance with subsection 6.6 of the State Plan supplement, and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
- (C) as applicable, the plan of the state for establishing, developing or improving community rehabilitation programs;

- (D) strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
- (E) strategies for assisting other components of the statewide work force investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

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

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

(e) **Evaluation and reports of progress.**

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

(2) **Attachment 4.11(e)(2):**

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

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

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

- (1) development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this State Plan, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment identified in **Attachment**

**4.11(a)** and goals and priorities of the state identified in **Attachments 4.11(c)(1)** and, if applicable, **Attachment 4.11(c)(3)**; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

**SECTION 5: ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES**

- 5.1 Information and referral services.** (Sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.37)  
The designated state agency has implemented an information and referral system that is adequate to ensure that individuals with disabilities, including individuals who do not meet the agency's order of selection criteria for receiving vocational rehabilitation services if the agency is operating on an order of selection, are provided accurate vocational rehabilitation information and guidance, including counseling and referral for job placement, using appropriate modes of communication, to assist such individuals in preparing for, securing, retaining or regaining employment, and are referred to other appropriate federal and state programs, including other components of the statewide work force investment system in the state.
- 5.2 Residency.** (Section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.42(c)(1))  
The designated state unit imposes no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the state.

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

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

Yes \_\_\_ No X

(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.

**STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT FOR THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM****SECTION 6: PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

- 6.1 Designated state agency.** (Section 625(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(a))  
The designated state agency for vocational rehabilitation services identified in paragraph 1.2 of the Title I State Plan is the state agency designated to administer the State Supported Employment Services Program authorized under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act.
- 6.2 Statewide assessment of supported employment services needs.** (Section 625(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(b))  
**Attachment 4.11(a)** describes the results of the comprehensive, statewide needs assessment conducted under Section 101(a)(15)(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and subparagraph 4.11(a)(1) of the Title I State Plan with respect to the rehabilitation needs of individuals with most significant disabilities and their need for supported employment services, including needs related to coordination.
- 6.3 Quality, scope and extent of supported employment services.** (Section 625(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(c) and .50(b)(2))  
**Attachment 6.3** describes the quality, scope and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive supported employment services. The description also addresses the timing of the transition to extended services to be provided by relevant state agencies, private nonprofit organizations or other sources following the cessation of supported employment service provided by the designated state agency.
- 6.4 Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds.** (Section 625(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(d) and .20)  
**Attachment 4.11(c)(4)** identifies the state's goals and plans with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- 6.5 Evidence of collaboration with respect to supported employment services and extended services.** (Sections 625(b)(4) and (5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(e))  
**Attachment 4.8(b)(4)** describes the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities to assist in the provision of supported employment services and other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations within the state, employers, natural supports, and other entities with respect to the provision of extended services.

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

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

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

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

**SECTION 7: FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION**

- 7.1 Five percent limitation on administrative costs.** (Section 625(b)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(g)(8))  
The designated state agency expends no more than five percent of the state's allotment under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for administrative costs in carrying out the State Supported Employment Services Program.
- 7.2 Use of funds in providing services.** (Sections 623 and 625(b)(6)(A) and (D) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.6(c)(2)(iv), .11(g)(1) and (4))
- (a) Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act are used by the designated state agency only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive such services.
  - (b) Funds provided under Title VI, Part B, are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act, in providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment.
  - (c) Funds provided under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act are not used to provide extended services to individuals who are eligible under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

**SECTION 8: PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

- 8.1 Scope of supported employment services.** (Sections 7(36) and 625(b)(6)(F) and (G) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54), 363.11(g)(6) and (7))
- (a) Supported employment services are those services as defined in Section 7(36) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54).
  - (b) To the extent job skills training is provided, the training is provided on-site.
  - (c) Supported employment services include placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- 8.2 Comprehensive assessments of individuals with significant disabilities.** (Sections 7(2)(B) and 625(b)(6)(B); 34 CFR 361.5(b)(6)(ii) and 363.11(g)(2))
- The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under Section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome.
- 8.3 Individualized plan for employment.** (Sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 625(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.46(b) and 363.11(g)(3) and (5))
- (a) An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.45 and .46 is developed and updated using funds under Title I.
  - (b) The individualized plan for employment:
    - (1) specifies the supported employment services to be provided;
    - (2) describes the expected extended services needed; and
    - (3) identifies the source of extended services, including natural supports, or, to the extent that it is not possible to identify the source of extended services at the time the individualized plan for employment plan is developed, a statement describing the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that sources will become available.
  - (c) Services provided under an individualized plan for employment are coordinated with services provided under other individualized plans established under other federal or state programs.

**Rhode Island  
Department of Human Services  
Office of Rehabilitation Services**

**FFY2009-FFY2010  
STATE PLAN  
UPDATES  
for  
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION  
SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**



**Stephen J. Brunero  
Acting Administrator**



**ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.2(c)**

**SUMMARY OF INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL; RESPONSE OF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT; AND EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTION OF INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS**

The State Rehabilitation Council, through its State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Subcommittee, met with an ORS representative to discuss the 2009 proposed State Plan. The SRC reviewed each attachment to the State Plan with the ORS representative.

**Issue #1**

The agency plans to continue coordination between the agency and education officials. The SRC asked whether there would be an emphasis on transition services commencing at age 14 (or younger if appropriate). This inquiry was based on the requirement, under the Regulations of the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Governing the Education of Children with Disabilities, that special educators begin the process of transition planning at that time, and are required to invite agencies such as ORS to participate.

**Response #1**

ORS indicated that it is difficult to enforce the timing of referrals from the school systems in the state. However, ORS stated that in its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) it can reinforce that transition activities need to begin at age 14. The new school reform regulations are striving to reinforce that transition is not an isolated event but a series of planned activities that are incorporated into the school curriculum in conjunction with referrals to adult providers.

**Issue #2**

The agency indicated that cooperative agreements with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers are utilized. A contract with the Paul Sherlock Center was utilized by ORS in order to develop a survey to community based agencies in order to identify what resources are needed to better serve minority and underserved populations as part of the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment. The SRC indicated an interest to review the conclusions and recommendations obtained from that survey and to provide any further recommendations if warranted.

**Response #2**

The SRC state plan, policy, and quality assurance committee met with the ORS representative to discuss the raw data obtained from the surveys. After examining the data, ORS identified some new potential vendors as well as some existing vendors who sought to learn more about the agency and what it could offer to their customers.

**Issue #3**

The SRC this year again voiced concerns about quality of service delivery that might be impacted by counselor vacancies and correspondingly high average caseloads of existing counselors.

**Response #3**

ORS agrees with concerns of the SRC about the ability to provide timely quality services with so many counselor vacancies. The agency indicated that it was not able to fill all the vacancies due to state budget constraints. As stated in the public hearing on 6/5/08, ORS may need to modify the categories from the Order of Selection that we are able to serve to only category #1 if staff vacancies persist.

**Issue #4**

Further, the agency's preparations for addressing the needs of FIP recipients with disabilities

who will be required to undergo short term job remediation further concerns the SRC given that counselors are already overburdened. The SRC requests from ORS data on the current needs for personnel at the agency and also projected needs for the next five years. Perhaps ORS could request that CSAVR could provide information on the reasonable numbers of cases per counselor and comparative information from other states' VR agencies.

**Response #4**

ORS concurs with the concerns of the SRC about the capacity to provide rehabilitation services to current and potential customers of our agency given the significant staff vacancies that exist and are anticipated. Although we have one Counselor dedicated to ORS-FIP customers state-wide with learning disabilities, she is already overwhelmed with the need of this population.

**Issue #5**

In addition, although the agency has ongoing recruitment and retention plans for new employees, the SRC wondered how ORS could respond to the needs of students when there have so many new vacancies. The SRC agrees that maintaining professionalism of the VR counselor is appropriate. The SRC was concerned about the agency's staff development training plans being curtailed due to staff shortages. The Client Assistance Program (CAP) could be a resource to fulfill some training needs related to the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act.

**Response #5**

Although we are prohibited from spending funds on training, ORS has a commitment to maintaining the professional standing of personnel. It is anticipated that training opportunities such as those presented by CAP and other programs will be incorporated into our training calendar over the next year.

**Issue #6**

The SRC remains interested in information regarding current labor market trends and the agency will provide highlights on LMI for SRC review of employment outcomes and wage information. In the context of meaningful employment outcomes and careers, the SRC supports ORS's use of a fee for service vendor to provide work incentives planning and assistance.

**Response #6**

Ensuring that individuals with disabilities have the most current and accurate information in order to make informed choices about work and benefits is a core foundation of the ORS program. At a time of diminishing resources, customer access to such essential sources of information has to be maintained.

**ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.8(b)(1)**

**COOPERATION WITH AGENCIES THAT ARE NOT IN THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE**

**INVESTMENT SYSTEM AND WITH OTHER ENTITIES**

Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) collaborates with programs and agencies providing services that will assist an individual with a disability to establish and reach an employment goal. Agencies that ORS works with include: hospitals, medical and disability support organizations, educational institutions, professional associations, shelters, community centers, community mental health agencies, substance abuse treatment facilities and advocacy groups. Memorandum of Understanding agreements have been negotiated with Department of Mental Health Retardation and Hospitals (MHRH), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Institutions of Higher Education (IHE - Rhode Island College, University of Rhode Island and Community College of Rhode Island), Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT), and the Rhode Island Department of Health (DOH). ORS has cultivated a strong working relationship with independent living centers to augment our vocational rehabilitation services with their ability to provide support services, transportation training, advocacy services, home assessments, independent living skills assessment, information and referral. In order to enhance these working relationships, ORS assigns Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to function as liaisons to agencies that participate with ORS in a mutual referral system.

**ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.8(b)(2)**

**COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Education (RIDE) and Department of Human Services/Office of Rehabilitation Services (DHS/ORS) targets students with disabilities for transition services with DHS/ORS for the purpose of achieving successful employment outcomes. Incorporated into the MOU is an expectation that all students eligible for services have an approved Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) prior to graduation. The MOU describes interagency collaboration and coordination, the role and responsibilities of each partner, the process for resolving disagreements, as well as, providing a Collaborative Services Chart (CSC). The CSC identifies which agency is primarily responsible for services in each of the following categories: Assessment Services, Career Development Services, Community Living Services, Related Services and Auxiliary Services.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) also exists between the Department of Human Services/Office of Rehabilitation Services (DHS/ORS) and three state institutions of higher education: Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), Rhode Island College (RIC) and the University of Rhode Island (URI). The MOU clarifies the role of each partner in fostering a seamless delivery system intended to support DHS/ORS customers attending post-secondary programs. It also defines the financial parameters for each partner in a cost sharing formula for support services, accommodations and assistive technology for college students with an active IPE with ORS. The New England Institute of Technology (NEIT) has recently approached ORS about negotiating an MOU similar to that in place with the state colleges and universities.

**ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.8(b)(3)**

**COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NON-PROFIT VOCATIONAL  
REHABILITATION SERVICE PROVIDERS**

ORS will continue to expand both contractual and fee-for-service agreements with a wide network of private vocational rehabilitation providers in order to meet the vocational rehabilitation needs of Rhode Islanders with disabilities. An identified need, as determined by the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment or by individualized needs of customers, will initiate efforts to create a new service or training option. ORS determines the contractual obligations through a negotiation process that includes establishment of measurable performance goals that are monitored at least quarterly.

In addition, fee-for-service agreements incorporate a similar process with the Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) being funded based upon service provision and outcomes. During the FFY2008-FFY2010 time frame, ORS will implement a Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment to obtain current information on customers' vocational rehabilitation needs. A contract has been developed with the Rhode Island College/Paul V. Sherlock Center to assist ORS in developing, distributing and analyzing a survey as part of the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment. The SRC State Plan and Quality Assurance Sub-Committee will participate in the development of conclusions based on survey findings.

**ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.8(b)(4)**

**EVIDENCE OF COLLABORATION REGARDING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES  
AND EXTENDED SERVICES**

ORS continues to embrace supported employment services as a means to enable individuals with the most significant disabilities to have access to work opportunities. The agency has increased the number of supported employment providers, has maintained involvement with two Supported Employment Advisory Councils, and has cooperative agreements with the Department of Mental Health Retardation and Hospitals (MHRH). The Division of Behavioral Health and Division of Developmental Disabilities are organized within the MHRH agency.

From FFY2008 through FFY2010, the Office of Rehabilitation Service (ORS) will continue to partner with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) of supported employment services so that customers can make informed choices about supported, integrated, and competitive employment options. ORS will continue to participate with the Division of Behavioral Health and Division of Developmental Disabilities through membership in their respective Supported Employment Advisory Councils. ORS staff also provide ongoing training and technical assistance to the supported employment CRPs. In FFY2009 ORS will continue to encourage CRPs to collaborate with each other to meet the diverse employment needs of significantly disabled individuals and to examine service delivery systems to ensure customer access to supported employment options.

ORS has a long-standing history of cultivating collaboration between ORS, CRPs and the netWORKri One-Stop system. It is anticipated that this effort will continue through FFY2010. ORS, through its parent agency, Rhode Island Department of Human Services, is a financial and programmatic partner with Rhode Island netWORKri One-Stop Centers. ORS counselors are located at each of the

One-Stop Centers in order to provide easier access to ORS services including applications, orientations, and placement services. ORS personnel attend monthly statewide Employer Services Network meetings at the Providence/Cranston One-Stop Career Center, netWORKri. In addition, ORS personnel provide consultation and training to the One-Stop staff on disability issues, accessibility considerations and assistive technology.

ORS, as a provider of supported employment services, engages community resources to provide the extended supports that help sustain employment for individuals with significant disabilities. Long-term supports are planned for and included in the individual's plan for employment. These plans are very individualized and generally define the scope and duration of each supported employment service. This plan also identifies the CRP who will continue to provide support services to the individual with a disability on a long-term basis. This shift in service delivery responsibility is well coordinated by the ORS counselor and CRP agency staff so that there will be a seamless delivery of needed services to the individual. The time frame for transitioning an individual from the support services by both ORS and the CRP to extended supports provided solely by the CRP is based on the individual needs of each customer.

## ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.10

### COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

The Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) is committed to providing quality rehabilitation services to its customers. Our commitment to this standard has resulted in a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling being required of all newly-appointed Rehabilitation Counselors. ORS has developed a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) as a systemic approach to developing its human resources. This system is intended to ensure that there is an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation, direct service, supervisory, administrative, fiscal and support personnel. Our CSPD plan follows:

#### I. DATA SYSTEM

##### **Personnel Data and Projections**

- In FFY 2007, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program provided services to 6,889 individuals. Forty-two (42) full-time equivalent (FTE) rehabilitation counselor positions have an average caseload of 130 customers. Currently, there are 6 vacancies for rehabilitation counselors and 2 counselors are out on maternity leave. The Administrator of ORS retired in December 2007 and the Deputy Administrator has been named Acting Administrator resulting in a vacant Deputy Administrator position.
- Over the next 3 to 5 year period, ORS estimates that approximately 13 individuals (administrators, supervisor, counselors and support staff) will be eligible for retirement. Given this number of employees that could potentially leave state service, ORS is actively pursuing graduates from local universities and colleges. In addition, ORS is providing leadership training to interested and qualified staff.

## **Personnel Resources**

- ORS has cultivated a relationship with the two area colleges that offer graduate training in rehabilitation counseling: Assumption College in Worcester, MA and Salve Regina University in Newport, R.I. There are approximately 122 students enrolled in the graduate programs (72 at Assumption and 50 at Salve Regina) of which 41 are expected to graduate in May 2008. These graduates are potential candidates for vacancies at ORS.
- Most of the funding for the program is federal, however, Rhode Island is currently experiencing a significant deficit in excess of \$384 million dollars. State government has proposed a decrease in the workforce of over one thousand positions through retirement, layoffs and privatization.

## **II. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

### **Institutions of Higher Education**

- ORS has ongoing communication with Assumption College and Salve Regina University to ensure that the present and projected needs of ORS are considered in their program planning. Both Assumption College and Salve Regina University offer a master level program through a combination of distance learning and facility-based courses. Salve Regina University has a satellite classroom located at the netWORKri One-Stop Career Center in Pawtucket.
- ORS continues to provide both practicum and internship sites for graduate students in Rehabilitation Counseling. ORS currently has three graduate students from Salve Regina University participating in a practicum experience and one student completing an internship assignment.

- The ORS Training Coordinator serves on the Training Project Advisory Council at Assumption College.

### **Professional Associations**

- In addition, our efforts to recruit qualified personnel have consisted of maintaining an active relationship with the Rhode Island Chapter of the National Rehabilitation Association. The Training Coordinator is the current President of the Rhode Island Rehabilitation Association (RIRA).

### **Special efforts to recruit, prepare, maintain Personnel from Minority Backgrounds and Individuals with Disabilities**

- ORS makes every effort to hire staff in accordance with the agency's affirmative action policies. In fact, ORS hired two minority staff members recently but lost both positions through a state government personnel reduction plan.
- ORS job announcements are distributed to community-based agencies and the World Wide Web to attract qualified individuals, particularly, individuals with disabilities and minority backgrounds. However, at this time there is a hiring freeze and vacancies are left unfilled.
- In the past year, ORS has hired a number of qualified individuals with minority backgrounds and those with disabilities (mobility challenges, visual impairments, deafness, psychiatric/emotional etc).

### **III. PERSONNEL STANDARDS**

#### **Adequately Prepared and Trained Staff**

- Rhode Island has elected to base its minimum personnel standards for recruitment of counselors on the requirement of a MA degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. This degree requirement exceeds the national CSPD requirements.
- Rehabilitation Counselors are encouraged to acquire and maintain Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credentials.
- A bill was introduced in the legislature last year regarding licensure. There are concerns that hiring will be more difficult with an already limited pool if a licensure bill passes.

#### **New Personnel**

- All new personnel are expected to meet the standard of a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from an accredited program.
- ORS has been able to fill all vacancies with individuals with a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling since October 1, 2000.
- ORS has worked aggressively with the institutions of higher education to recruit qualified individuals to fill vacancies by offering practicum and internship experiences to graduate students. Rhode Island is currently piloting a project with Salve Regina University to provide stipends for student interns. The ORS Training Coordinator is exploring a similar internship option with Assumption College.

#### **Existing Personnel**

- As of March 2008, 38 out of 42 ORS counselors meet the standard (90% compliance)

of a Masters degree in Rehabilitation Counselor. All field VR Supervisors and Administrators meet the CSPD standard.

- The four counselors who do not have a MA in Rehabilitation Counseling are functioning within the parameters of an approved plan to achieve the standard and are limited in their ability to practice independently. Two counselors who do not meet the standard are eligible to retire and one has elected to retire as of June 30, 2008.
- ORS has addressed the CSPD training needs of the 3 remaining individuals in the following manner:
  1. update each individual's training plan;
  2. clarify the CSPD requirements of their jobs;
  3. educate the counselors regarding the upcoming trends in proposed licensure;
  4. establish a monitoring system for quarterly updates on staff progress with their plans; and
  5. involve Supervisor and HRD Personnel in the process.
- ORS expects that all staff will be in compliance within 24 months (2010).
- ORS continues to dedicate resources to support the CSPD plan of each counselor.
- Staff from minority backgrounds and staff with disabilities have equal access to generic training and leadership opportunities.

#### **IV. STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

- ORS recognizes the importance of ensuring that its staff has the necessary skills and abilities to provide quality services in a professional and timely manner.
- The training coordinator met with all staff to conduct the annual assessment of personnel training needs. This needs assessment was conducted from December 2007

thru February 2008.

- The needs assessment was analyzed for priorities and a training schedule was developed. The implementation was restricted by the large number of vacancies and the threat of additional cutbacks in state government.
- The training plan includes such topics as working with the One-Stop Career Centers, Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIA), and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. New regulations regarding the Ticket to Work are expected to be finalized within the next year. At that time training will be made available to staff.
- Program improvement activities will generate data about additional training needs.
- In order to retain qualified staff and in anticipation of retirement plans, ORS will offer leadership development training and capacity building opportunities to interested staff. Management staff, in anticipation of the need for succession planning, will provide in-depth job analysis of their positions. This is of particular importance, given the number of personnel that could potentially retire in the near future and the uniqueness of some positions.
- The Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE) grant recipient who replaces the New England Rehabilitation Continuous Education Program (NERCEP) will be utilized to provide state-of-the-art training programs for counselors, supervisors and CRP vendors.

## V. COMMUNICATION NEEDS

- Access to interpreters, the Language Line, use of an FM system and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) reporters are available for staff to communicate

with diverse customer populations, for staff trainings and for supervision.

- All staff trainings are now videotaped and available in a video library for new staff. These recordings function as refresher opportunities for current staff and personnel with a Supportive Action Plan.
- The Information Services Technician II manages the ORS and the Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) web pages, has expertise in providing materials in alternate formats, and develops electronic tools for counselors. ORS assures that all information disseminated to staff with disabilities and customers is accessible.
- ORS' Cultural Diversity Cadre meets regularly to raise awareness and help develop materials for culturally diverse populations.

#### **VI. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM**

- The annual needs assessment conducted by the training coordinator elicits input from counselors, supervisors, support staff and fiscal personnel regarding training needs.
- ORS utilizes supervisory observations, self-identified training needs, and productivity reports to enhance professional development.
- If a supportive action plan is necessary, the supportive action plan would be in compliance with the CSPD.

#### **VI. COORDINATION OF THE CSPD AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING**

- ORS will continue to implement a CSPD plan as part of the In-Service Training Program.
- The plan for training will focus on program areas that enhance the ability of state

personnel to function in their present position and to acquire new skills to enhance the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with the most significant disabilities.

- ORS has Rehabilitation Counselors (Transition Counselors) assigned to every high school in the state to work cooperatively with students, parents, special education professionals and 504 coordinators to develop quality transition plans. The Transition Counselors meet regularly for training purposes, problem solving strategies, and general support.

## **VII. STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL**

- Pursuant to the Act, ORS offers to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) the opportunity to review and comment on the CSPD.
- ORS will attach the comments and include them in the FFY 2009 update.
- SRC Members include:

Chairperson, J. David Sienko

Jeanne M. Giroux

Vice-Chair, Joseph Ferreira

Michael Hazard

Secretary, Catherine Sansonetti

Margaret Hoye

Janice Belasco

Anne LeClerc

Rocco Bruno

Gary J. Levine

Rick Costa

Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett

Domenic DiOrio

Silvermoon Mars

Susan Donovan

Lucille Massemينو

Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor

Lorna Ricci

Dr. Judith L. Drew

Vincent Rossi

Juan Tronosco

Herbert Weiss

Mary E. Wambach

Linda L. Deschenes, ORS Liaison

**ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.11(a)**

**RESULTS OF COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION  
NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AND NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP,  
OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS**

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, mandates that ORS, in partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council, complete a Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment (C.N.A.) at three-year increments. The C.N.A. is intended to identify the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including those in need of Supported Employment, minorities with significant disabilities, underserved individuals, and individuals with disabilities served by other components of the workforce development network. In addition, the C.N.A. is intended to identify the need to develop or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs). ORS views the C.N.A. as an evolving process that incorporates information from several diverse sources rather than from any one event or data source. During FFY 2009-FFY 2010, ORS will be addressing the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment using several resources including:

- Agency strategic planning
- Annual personnel needs assessments
- Community Rehabilitation Provider Surveys
- Compliance with Standards & Indicators
- Customer satisfaction survey
- Employer surveys
- Implementation of the ORS 107 Monitoring Report

## **AGENCY STRATEGIC PLANNING**

On an annual basis, the staff of ORS attends a day-long planning meeting to identify the challenges and solutions needed to more effectively assist all individuals with significant disabilities to select, prepare for, obtain and maintain employment. This year we utilized the issues raised in the RSA Fiscal 107 Monitoring Report as the focus of our planning day. From this process, the strategic plan was developed.

- Emphasize marketing strategies that showcase customer movement toward increased self-sufficiency, highlight customer capabilities, and address the needs of specific businesses were selected as a priority
- Enhance ORS assessment activities as a pre-cursor to development of an employment plan that promotes informed choice, self-determination, job retention and the value of life-long learning
- Prepare for addressing the needs of Family Independence Program (FIP) recipients with disabilities who will be seeking rapid job placement through the proposed “Work First” initiative
- Train staff in the use of group work as a viable intervention and provide joint training opportunities for CRP and ORS personnel
- Maximize our collaboration with the netWORKri Career Centers, Department of Health outreach initiatives, and the business community

## **ANNUAL PERSONNEL NEEDS ASSESSMENTS**

The Training Coordinator of ORS conducts an annual needs assessment. From December 2007-February 2008, interviews were held with staff to establish a list of training topics and concerns. A

training schedule was developed based upon the identified needs. Implementation of the training calendar has been compromised by the large number of position vacancies. In addition, ORS estimates that within the next 3-5 years, approximately thirteen individuals will be eligible for retirement, thus leaving a vacuum in expertise, institutional knowledge and historical perspective. The agency is actively pursuing potential graduates from the two local colleges that offer MA programs in Rehabilitation Counseling. In addition, training opportunities are being provided to address succession planning. An adequate supply of qualified Rehabilitation Counselors, supervisory, administrative, fiscal and support personnel are essential to provide quality rehabilitation services to its customers.

### **COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROVIDER (CRP) SURVEYS**

According to the *Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training State of the State: A 2006 Statistical Profile of Cities and Towns*, the state population is increasingly diverse in both ethnic and language minorities. African-American, Asian and Pacific Islanders had large numeric gains in their total population, while the Hispanic/Latino community nearly doubled in size with a total population of 90,280. In response to this significant change in demographics, ORS has elected to develop a CRP survey that specifically examines vendors' experience and ability to work with minority communities. The results of this survey will assist ORS in targeting CRP development tailored to the needs of minority communities. Of the 350 surveys that were distributed to ORS vendors and non-vendor community agencies, there were 117 respondents. Both the SRC State Plan Sub-Committee and the ORS staff assigned to the survey task reviewed the resultant data. Several significant findings were reflected by the results:

- 88% of vendors were satisfied to highly satisfied in their relationship with ORS
- The need to reflect a more ethnically diverse ORS workforce was suggested as a strategy

- to engage minority populations
- Several non-vendors have a history of working with diverse populations and can be pursued as potential ORS vendors

### **COMPLIANCE WITH STANDARDS & PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Over the past three years, the Office of Rehabilitation Services has been one of nine states who have met or exceeded all the Standard & Performance Indicators as dictated by Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. In order to provide the highest quality of services to customers, the ORS Program Evaluator will monitor agency compliance with all standards and indicators on a quarterly basis. Findings will be reported to administrative and supervisory personnel as appropriate.

### **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY**

The customer satisfaction aspect of our C.N.A. will consist of satisfaction questionnaires distributed as part of our Continuous Quality Improvement Plan. A survey instrument, to be developed, will be distributed to a percentage of customers who have been closed with the agency during the previous year.

The Continuous Quality Improvement Plan will also include ongoing supervisor case reviews to ensure quality services are being delivered to all customers.

### **ORS EMPLOYER SURVEY**

The ORS Workforce Development Supervisor functions as the liaison to the business community. In 2006, she facilitated the development of a Business Advisory Council (BAC). The initial BAC consisted of twelve businesses that provided ORS with information about labor market trends and

strategies to increase employability of customers. The BAC has since grown to twenty-one businesses that meet annually and discuss their recruitment and hiring needs.

The ORS Workforce Development Supervisor designed a survey that was distributed to local businesses; such as: Cox Communications, Consumer Value Store (CVS), Nordstrom, Raytheon and Life Span. The survey was designed to ascertain how ORS could function as a resource to the business community. A 30% response rate is testament to the positive relationship between the companies and ORS. The Workforce Development Supervisor initiated contact with each survey respondent to learn more about their concerns and, where possible, assist with problem resolution.

The predominant theme of the respondents was a need to learn more about Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology in the workplace. This concern coincides with those of the Business Leadership Network (BLN) as an issue to be addressed. So over the next few years, ORS will explore strategies to collaborate with the business community to address their concerns about technology in the work environment.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ORS 107 MONITORING REPORT**

Between Fall 2006 and Summer 2007, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) conducted an extensive review of ORS. This review process included program performance statistics, on-site and telephone discussions with stakeholders, two on-site visits and multiple discussions with members of the SRC. RSA found several strengths in the program: leadership and dedicated staff, collaboration with key partners, statewide presence at the netWORKri One-Stop Centers, statewide cooperative partnerships with all school districts and transition services to youth. Several areas were identified as programmatic goals:

- Decrease homemaker outcomes

- Develop and implement a comprehensive continuous quality improvement plan
- Improve the quality of employment outcomes
- Improve the rehabilitation rate for transitioning youth

## **RESULTS**

Based on the ongoing commitment to compliance with all Standards and Performance Indicators, the recommendations of the 107 Monitoring Report, findings from strategic planning process, and the CRP Surveys, ORS will focus on the following areas in FFY 2009:

- Development and implementation of a Quality Improvement Plan
- Improvement of quality employment outcomes
- Investment in expanding and improving our CRP and collaboration network
- Reduction of homemaker outcomes
- Recruitment of trained staff and skills enhancement of existing personnel
- Ensure the rehabilitation rate of transitioning youth and the minority ratio comply with Standards and Performance Indicators
- Provide consultation services that respond to the needs of the business community
- Develop marketing strategies in partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council

**ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED AND COSTS OF SERVICES**

**I. NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES UNDER THIS STATE PLAN**

For FFY2007 there were 2,126 new applicants, and 2,237 individuals were deemed eligible. There were a total number of 1,504 individuals who developed their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), and 745 individuals who had successful employment outcomes.

For FFY2008, ORS has a goal of 2,240 new applicants, given staff vacancies, and expects 2,100 individuals to become eligible. ORS anticipates that 1,505 new Individualized Plans for Employment will be developed and 746 successful outcomes achieved.

For FFY2009, ORS projects 2,245 new applicants, given filled vacancies, with 2,105 individuals to become eligible for ORS services. ORS anticipates that 1,510 individuals will develop Individualized Plans for Employment and projects 750 successful outcomes.

**II. NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER TITLE 1 AND TITLE VI AND NUMBERS TO BE SERVED IN EACH ORDER OF SELECTION PRIORITY CATEGORY**

In FFY2009, the projected number of clients to be served under an IPE is 4,300. One hundred percent of those expected to be served will be classified in the Order of Selection as either Category #1 - most significant, or Category #2 - significantly disabled.

For FFY2009, ORS is expected to serve:

Category #1 (most significant) 3,440 (Title I – 90% Title VI – 10%)

Category #2 (significant) 860 (Title I – 100% Title VI – 0%)

**III. COST OF SERVICES FOR PROJECTED TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS TO BE SERVED INCLUDING SERVICE COSTS UNDER EACH OOS CATEGORY**

Average expenditure per client in FFY2009 is estimated to be: \$ 3,100

Total cost of services for OOS Category #1 are estimated to be: \$10,664,000

Total cost of services for OOS Category #2 are estimated to be: \$ 2,666,000

**ATTACHMENT 4.11(c)(1)**

**STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

The state's goals and priorities, policies and planning activities are jointly agreed upon by the state agency and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). These goals are generated from the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment (C.N.A.), compliance with federal standards and performance indicators, monitoring reviews, quality improvement findings and feedback from customers, advocates and other stakeholders. Inherent in these goals is a belief that ORS will assist individuals with significant disabilities to move toward achievement of self sufficiency. ORS goals for FFY 2009 are as follows:

**GOAL #1: STRATEGIES TO INCREASE QUALITY OUTCOMES**

In order to increase quality employment outcomes, ORS will address several specific target areas:

**BENEFITS AND WORK INCENTIVES**

- Provide access to benefits counseling for customers to make informed choices regarding work
- Promote awareness of the SSA work incentives to reduce fears regarding the impact of work on benefits - both cash payments and medical coverage
- Offer work incentives planning and assistance services through the Work Incentive, Planning & Advocacy (WIPA) program with Social Security Administration (SSA)
- Expand benefits counseling through fee-for-service vendor
- Offer informational sessions for SSI/SSDI beneficiaries three times per month at the netWORKri locations throughout the state

- Provide training on the Ticket to Work regulations when finalized, specifically, the “Timely Progress” provision
- Ensure customer knowledge that ticket participation and assignment are voluntary

#### **DEVELOPMENT OF A CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

- Design and implement a system for monitoring, evaluating and providing timely information for staff and administration about ORS movement toward accomplishment of goals identified in the State Plan
- Obtain and implement new MIS system for analysis and use of program data

#### **EMPLOYER RELATIONSHIPS**

- Continue to increase partnerships between businesses and ORS while enhancing existing collaborations with the business community
- Develop marketing materials and website that showcase customer employment success and self-sufficiency
- Use marketing strategies to cultivate business awareness and interest in ORS as a workforce resource for their employment needs
- Communicate with employers regarding their needs
- Identify the skills needed for quality outcomes through dialogue with employers, including federal employers, Chambers of Commerce, Workforce Investment Boards, and trade organizations
- Increase use of ORS “Work Try Out” agreements resulting in increased placements and new partnerships with employers

- Disseminate announcements of job openings through internal email system
- Utilize internet employment sites such as Monster.com, projo.com, etc.
- Maintain active participation on the CSAVR National and Regional employment group and development of a national business network
- Participate in the FFY 2009 New England Business Summit that will be held in nearby Massachusetts. The ORS Workforce Development Supervisor is an active participant in the planning of this event
- Cultivate development of partnership and membership on SRC Employment Sub-Committee
- Utilize the 21 member Business Advisory Council to advise ORS on developing appropriate skills for current and future workforce needs
- Improve ORS marketing and public relations through membership and expansion in Rhode Island Business Leadership Network, Chambers of Commerce, Woman's Business Enterprise and Minority Business Enterprise

**POST-SECONDARY SERVICES**

- Expand MOUs with colleges to include transition services from college to career
- Develop ORS staff liaisons for each college in Rhode Island to be knowledgeable about majors, career services, and disability services
- Join national and regional organizations that address the high unemployment rate of college graduates with disabilities

**SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT: (refer to Attachment 4.11(c)(4)**

- Provide refresher training to ORS and CRP personnel on supported employment place/train philosophy

- Coordinate with the community mental health centers and developmental disability organizations to increase the number of customers obtaining and maintaining competitive employment

### **TRANSITION SERVICES**

- Provide transition youth with services to prepare for and obtain employment
- Develop a team comprised of Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) Social Worker and Rehabilitation Counselor to strengthen services to transition-age students to better prepare for post-secondary activities
- Expand summer work experiences, access to assistive technology, mobility, work incentive information and self advocacy skills
- Promote and focus on career exploration and the value of employment
- Offer a Transition Conference every two years, annual disability forums, and opportunities to participate in conferences, workshops and exhibits.
- Develop strategies with RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN) to engage parents in learning about transitioning to the world of work
- Outreach to 504 Coordinators to ensure that students with disabilities have access to ORS services
- Promote career exploration through work experiences and mentoring opportunities  
Support participation in Youth Leadership initiatives, such as the annual Youth Leadership Forum

### **TRANSPORTATION ISSUES**

- Address transportation issues in IPEs early in the rehabilitation process

- Explore the feasibility of developing an Assistive Technology Alternative Finance Program to enable customers to purchase vehicles to get to and from work
- Encourage high schools to promote and provide travel training to increase self sufficiency for post-secondary training and employment

### **TRAINING**

- Develop strategy for timely services for Family Independence (FIP) individuals, given basic changes in state law and existing federal regulations for this population
- Identify barriers to employment such as social skills, self advocacy, assistive technology needs, literacy level, work incentives, and job accommodations. Once identified, incorporate needed services into the IPE
- Promote and increase work experiences, including internships, co-op, summer experiences, and volunteer work for adults and students to increase employability
- Expand services to address social skills, job readiness, interview skills and job retention strategies to enhance employment outcomes
- Develop group work services such as post employment support group
- Organize joint training of counselors and service providers toward a self sufficiency philosophy and program designs that result in quality outcomes
- Share best practices and use teamwork on complex cases to increase timely services and successful outcomes
- Enhance ORS assessment activities to include academic and computer skill levels
- Increase staff, service providers and individuals' knowledge about accommodations, ergonomics and assistive technology resources

- Provide training in self advocacy and reasonable accommodation requests to enhance employability and quality outcomes
- Offer workshops about labor market information, completion and use of on-line job applications. Through collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, ORS will be able to use their computer lab and thus increase the capacity of the workshop from 3 to 10 participants.

**GOAL #1A: EVALUATION OF EFFORTS TO INCREASE QUALITY OUTCOMES**

- Meet Standard One of increasing successful closures annually, and all indicators, including:
  - Increase average competitive wage (Indicator 1.5) from baseline of \$10.73 in 2007
  - Increase rehabilitation rate in FFY 08, 09 and 10. (Indicator 1.2) from baseline of 59.02 in FFY 2007
  - Decrease homemaker outcomes from baseline of 46 in FFY 2007
- Increase number of customers with successful employment outcomes after participation in post-secondary training or education to begin measurement in FFY2009
- Develop longitudinal data tool to measure impact of post secondary training and education on employment outcomes and earnings
- Develop baseline in 2008 of successful employment outcomes of transition students who participated in vocational evaluation activity

**GOAL #2: STRATEGIES TO INCREASE THE SERVICE AND EMPLOYMENT**

**OUTCOME RATIOS FOR MINORITY POPULATIONS IN 2009**

- Increase capacity to serve minority populations by adding new vendors, services, and bi-lingual ORS staff; evaluate and analyze the results of the vendor survey
- Collaborate on Rhode Island's two Youth Councils associated with two Workforce Investment Boards (WIB)
- Provide technical assistance on youth with disabilities as they transition into the workforce
- Provide input on the Department of Labor & Training's (DLT) "Shared Vision for Youth" Pilot Program to help develop a coordinated infrastructure between state and federal programs which are targeting the highest risk youth. Ten (10) youth with disabilities will be part of the pilot group of youth.
- Develop strong partnerships with community-based agencies and training programs which primarily serve minority populations
- Provide liaisons to community-based organizations that serve minority populations
- Develop a partnership with minority staff currently serving on the State Rehabilitation Council
- Arrange orientations for potential customers in Pawtucket One Stops for potential customers and agencies
- Monitor agency performance on Standard Two by Quality Improvement Supervisor and Cultural Diversity Cadre
- Complete C.N.A. survey to identify capacity in CRP network to meet employment needs of minority and underserved populations

- Utilize new marketing materials to be placed in community organizations and businesses, including information in Spanish
- Measure referral and outcome results once new MIS is operational
- Ensure all agency, WIPA, and orientation materials, including those found on the ORS website, are in Spanish
- Enlist SRC members with contacts in the minority community as a resource in planning
- Provide in-service training on cultural sensitivity and competence, including instruction on how to use interpreters and the Language Line

**GOAL #2A: EVALUATION OF EFFORTS TO INCREASE THE SERVICE AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME RATIOS FOR MINORITY POPULATIONS IN 2009**

- Monitor compliance with Standard & Performance Indicator 2.1
- Identify service needs for minority populations utilizing vendor survey results
- Develop additional CRP services to meet those needs
- Increase the number of CRPs that have bilingual capacity

**GOAL #3: STRATEGIES TO INCREASE CUSTOMER CHOICE AND SATISFACTION**

- Reinforce agency commitment to the customers' right to informed choice and customer satisfaction
- Train new counselors, graduate student practicum and intern students on informed choice
- Ensure that customers' interests and goals are explored
- Provide continuous training to both ORS counselors and CRPs on informed choice
- Develop new CRPs in response to customer preferences and labor market needs

- Ensure that informed choice continues to be reflected in its policies and procedures and publications
- Ensure customers are aware of their right to access the Client Assistance Program (CAP)

**#3A: EVALUATION OF EFFORTS TO INCREASE CUSTOMER CHOICE AND SATISFACTION**

- FFY 2009 will be a baseline year to collect data on customer satisfaction through our Continuous Quality Improvement plan surveys to be distributed twice/year
- Monitor and compare the numbers of customer resolutions sought through Mediation and Hearings as compared to FFY 2008
- Information from customer satisfaction surveys and customer relations activities during FFY 2009 will be utilized to measure customer concerns and identify training needs

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.11(c)(3)**

**ORDER OF SELECTION**

The current Order of Selection is expected to continue from FFY2008 through FFY2010, thereby allowing ORS to serve all eligible individuals under these two categories. Office of Rehabilitation Services has lost positions due to retirements, budget constraints, promotions, maternity leaves, and workforce reductions. Therefore, in order to provide high quality employment outcomes, ORS will continue to monitor the current priority classification within the Order of Selection, and adjust if necessary. All clients with Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) are individuals with the most significant and significant disabilities. These individuals require multiple services over an extended time. The Order of Selection consists of the following three categories:

1. Individuals with the most significant disabilities
2. Individuals with significant disabilities
3. All other individuals with disabilities who cannot be classified in a higher category

ORS assures that its Order of Selection (OOS) policy gives first priority to individuals in Category 1 with the most significant disabilities, and Category 2 with significant disabilities. Services are delivered within a comprehensive, coordinated program that is designed to assist these individuals to prepare for and engage in gainful employment in an integrated setting. The Order of Selection does not discriminate by type of disability, economic status, or protected class.

The Code for Federal Regulations defines an individual with the most significant disability in the following manner:

- An individual who has a severe physical or mental disability that seriously limits three or more functional capacities (mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of employment outcome, and
- whose vocational rehabilitation is expected to require multiple VR services over an extended period of time, and
- who have one or more physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, mental retardation, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, musculoskeletal disorder, neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), paraplegia, quadriplegia, other spinal cord conditions, sickle cell anemia, specific learning disabilities, end-stage renal disease, or from another disability or combination of disabilities, which based on an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs, causes comparable substantial functional limitations.

ORS notifies all individuals assigned to Category Three of information and referral services to assist them with preparation for obtaining employment and related services.

Individuals are reassessed when additional information relevant to OOS is received subsequent to a classification decision. Requests for post employment services are not subject to Order of Selection.

Projections for numbers to be served in FFY2009 are based on recent performance:

OOS Category 1 3,440

OOS Category 2 860

The goal for all the consumers referenced by the Order of Selection categories is an employment outcome. This employment outcome reflects the individual's informed career choice that has evolved from information about skills, interests, preferences, abilities and the labor market. The Individualized Plan for Employment is then developed to reflect that choice and the specific services/interventions needed by the individual to reach that employment outcome.

It is anticipated that multiple services will be necessary over an extended period of time in order for the individual to reach their employment goal. Quantifying the length of time an individual is active with ORS is difficult as the necessary services, duration and outcome is so specific to the needs of each customer.

**ATTACHMENT 4.11(c)(4)**

**GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI, PART B FUNDS**

Title VI, Part B continues to provide \$300,000 of federal funding annually. ORS uses these funds to assist the most significantly disabled populations through carefully crafted, individually planned supported employment services. These services are provided through a partnership between ORS and a number of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) on a fee-for-service basis.

In FFY 2007, 317 individuals received multiple types of supported employment services through twenty-two CRP agencies. However, funding cuts, high staff turnovers, and personnel vacancies among CRP vendor agencies continue to be chronic problems. In FFY2007, ORS assisted five agencies to re-organize their supported employment programs through technical assistance and training provided by ORS personnel: CRP Specialist, Regional Supervisors, and ORS Counseling Staff.

ORS supported employment plan for FFY 2008, FFY 2009 and FFY 2010 mirror similar goals to those identified in Attachment 4.11 ( c):

**GOAL #1: INCREASE QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR CUSTOMERS OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

- Support CRP training opportunities to better prepare providers for the renewed focus on quality employment outcomes, increased wages and increased number of hours worked/week.

- Facilitate training for CRPs through a number of resources: a contract with the Sherlock Center's Supported Employment (SE) Training Program, the Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE) and sponsoring national teleconference trainings at ORS.
- Market the benefits of ORS involvement to the Administration and Management staff of agencies that are not presently ORS vendor agencies.
- Modify the fee structure for provision of the supported employment delivery system to provide a more outcome-driven reimbursement structure. This new "Tier" model has been piloted with several CRPs over the past few years and has proven to be quite effective in delivering quality outcomes. This will necessitate training of ORS staff as well as CRP agency staff in this new system of service delivery and fee structure.
- Encourage CRP agencies to evaluate the cost saving opportunities of collaborating with other agencies on some of their operational functions.
- Utilize the CRP/ORS Developmental Disability Council and the Behavioral Health Council as a resource to examine best supported employment practices in all areas of service provision.
- Arrange and participate in bi-annual joint ORS, Division of Developmental Disabilities and Division of Behavioral Health Services meetings.

**GOAL #1A: EVALUATION OF EFFORTS TO INCREASE QUALITY OUTCOMES FOR CUSTOMERS OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

- Meet Standard One of increasing successful closures annually, and all indicators, including:

- Increase number of supported employment successful closures based on 2007

**GOAL #2: STRATEGIES TO INCREASE THE SERVICE AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME**

**RATIOS FOR MINORITY WHO ARE CUSTOMERS OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

- Identify need for DD vendor development to work with cultural and language minorities through the C.N.A. Vendor survey
- Develop strong partnerships with supported employment providers who have experience with minority populations
- Monitor agency performance on Standard 2.1
- Ensure agency materials in Spanish and other formats
- Provide in-service training with CRPs on cultural sensitivity and competence, including instruction on how to use interpreters and the Language Line

**GOAL #2A: EVALUATION OF EFFORTS TO INCREASE THE SERVICE AND**

**EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME RATIOS FOR MINORITY WHO ARE CUSTOMERS OF**

**SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

- FFY 2009 will be baseline year to gather information about the capacity of Supported Employment providers to meet the needs of minority populations who are also the most significantly disabled.
- FFY 2009 will also examine the number of minority populations served by Supported Employment.
- Meet or exceed Standard #2.1

**GOAL#3: STRATEGIES TO INCREASE CUSTOMER CHOICE AND SATISFACTION OF  
CUSTOMERS OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

- Train new counselors, graduate student practicum and intern students about informed choice and customer satisfaction
- Develop training and CRP options in response to customer preferences and changing labor market needs
- Provide a leadership role with the CRPs so that the intent and concept of informed choice is generalized to entire rehabilitation network

**GOAL#3A: EVALUATION OF EFFORTS TO INCREASE CUSTOMER CHOICE AND  
SATISFACTION CUSTOMERS OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

- Information from customer satisfaction surveys and customer relations activities during FFY 2009 will be utilized to measure customer concerns and identify training needs.
- Increase the number of supported employment providers from baseline of 22

**ATTACHMENT 4.11(d)**

**STATE STRATEGIES FOR TITLE 1 FUNDS FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I & E)  
FOR FFY2009**

Based on the needs identified in the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment, ORS' Goals and Priorities, commitment to serving individuals with the most significant disabilities who are minorities and ensuring equal access to VR and SE services, in FFY2009, Innovation and Expansion (I & E) funds and program development strategies will be implemented in the following areas:

**ADDRESS NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT  
AND GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

- Develop an array of marketing materials (in English and Spanish): table top displays, brochures, pamphlets and flyers to market ORS employment services to businesses, referral sources, potential customers and their families
- Formulate a plan for developing a partnership with the student services, placement services and financial aid services of local colleges and universities in order to more effectively assist customers in successfully completing school and being better prepared to compete for jobs
- Use I&E funds to sponsor a second statewide Transition Conference intended to target Rehabilitation Counselors, Educators and High School personnel, Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) working with youth and parents
- Partner with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) of supported employment services and the Division of Developmental Disabilities in FFY 2009 to develop a system

- of services that provides increased options and choices to customers about supported, integrated, competitive employment options
- Develop a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan that evaluates agency services and outcomes in order to meet the goals and objectives of the State Plan

#### **ASSISTANCE TO OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE WORK FORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEM**

- Provide technical assistance and proposal review as an active member of Rhode Island's two Workforce Investment Board Youth Councils
- Ensure that youth with disabilities are included as a target population in the Governor's Workforce Investment initiatives
- Maintain ORS presence at the newly created One-Stop Youth Centers and at each of the netWORKri sites and utilize the resources of the One-Stop Youth Centers
- Function as an instructor in the Certified Case Management Training Program of the Community Mental Health Centers by educating participants to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program as an employment resource
- Increase linkages between the Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) resources, existing rehabilitation technology contractors, and ORS counselors, to ensure that assistive technology is incorporated into customer services on a statewide basis throughout each stage of the rehabilitation process
- Prepare to provide rehabilitation services to the FIP participants of the welfare reform initiative, "Work First"

## **ESTABLISH, DEVELOP OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS**

- Develop summer work experience programs with several CRPs (Trudeau and Homestead groups) for youth with significant developmental disabilities as existing resources do not have the expertise or personnel resources to address the unmet vocational needs of this population of disabilities
- Develop a program for youth who transition from the Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) Social Service Program to the SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Program. As students move from one system to the next, they often disengage in the process. The two programs plan to provide joint service provision until the youth have successfully engaged with the Vocational Rehabilitation program.
- Explore development of a fee-for-service program with the Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN) to educate students and their parents about the differences in access to resources in high school vs. college/work. These sessions will also focus on building self-advocacy and self-sufficiency skills to increase successful quality employment outcomes.
- I&E funds will be used to support a statewide strategic planning meeting with stakeholders to develop a renewed vision for the Cooperative Agreement between DHS/ORS and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). The Cooperative Agreement supports vocational evaluation and work experiences for students with disabilities through five Regional Vocational Assessment Centers and will be expiring in 2009.
- The CRP Supervisor is working with ORS vendors in exploring transportation options including van leasing with organizations such as Easy Street. The use of leased vans

would allow CRPs to allocate more resources to customer services rather than van maintenance.

- Provide training to CRPs in vocational evaluation and job development
- Assist CRPs in providing quality services to ORS customers, which is critical to ensure customer satisfaction and a successful quality employment outcome
- Assume a leadership role in exposing CRPs to national trends, such as the Vermont Inclusion Model, related to supported employment. Recently, CRPs and ORS personnel participated in a tele-training on the Vermont Inclusion Model that encourages integration into employment settings as an alternative to workshops.

## **METHODS TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**

- Utilize a fee-for-service model to ensure that customers have access to a Benefits Counselor
- Develop partnerships among agencies in order to capture the strengths of each as resources decrease and service requests increase. With decreasing resources, agencies are exploring consolidation of services in order to meet customers' employment needs.
- Collaborate with service providers to support youth being released from the Rhode Island Training School to apply for ORS services
- Partner with innovative programs such as "AS220" - a creative arts initiative, and the RI "Diner Program". The "Diner Program" is a training initiative for youth transitioning from the Training School to learn construction trades through the renovation of mobile diners and food service skills through the operation of the mobile diners. These efforts may lessen the likelihood of recidivism by increasing employment opportunities to youth.

- Participate in National Mentoring Day, and create an alternate mentoring experience to increase flexibility and thus participation
- Explore the development of an Alternative Finance Program (AFP) with the state ATAP program using I&E funds. This innovation will involve contracting with a well-established AFP program in a neighboring state and a commercial lender in RI. This AFP program has loaned 70% of the funds to individuals with disabilities who need personal assistive technology in order to work.
- Examine the feasibility of accessing the mini-vans that are retired by the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) after five years of use. ORS will explore in collaboration with the SRC Transportation Subcommittee, models to keep these vehicles on the road to increase access for individuals with disabilities.
- Complete a statewide survey on transportation to enable the SRC Transportation Subcommittee to identify issues and obstacles to customer access to adequate transportation

**OUTREACH ACTIVITIES TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, UNSERVED AND UNDERSERVED IN THE VR PROGRAM**

- Cultivate liaison relationships with community-based agencies to ensure access to services and training programs, which primarily serve minority populations
- Ensure access to ORS information and services through use of a Language Line, interpreters from a variety of resources, as well as producing materials in languages other

than English. In addition, ORS is cultivating recruitment of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) who have a presence in targeted minority populations such as Progresso Latino, South East Asian Economic Development, Native American communities, Urban League, and Bilingual psychologist and therapists.

- Ensure minority representation on the SRC with the addition of representation from the Latino and Native American populations
- Develop a presentation, possibly in PowerPoint format, that will be produced in several different languages including ASL
- Provide general information sessions about benefits and employment options in Spanish
- Place marketing materials about ORS in community-based locations frequented by large numbers of individuals: markets, libraries, health centers

**OVERCOME BARRIERS RELATED TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM**

- Address equal access issues by ensuring that the program is responsive to cultural and language diversity issues of current and potential customers and personnel
- Encourage cultural diversity among its CRP network as well as engaging our CRP partners to provide accessible service
- Support new and existing CRPs to provide universal access to their services. For example, ORS encouraged Goodwill Industries to expand services to Deaf & Hard of Hearing customers, to customers with Traumatic Brain Injury, and to customers with

Visual Impairments. Goodwill Industries responded positively to this suggestion. ORS has adjusted its Fee Schedule to accommodate this program expansion. The ORS CRP Supervisor and the staff of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) have assisted Goodwill Industries in identifying the assistive technology considerations that have to be incorporated into a vocational evaluation and job placement program for individuals with visual impairments.

- Recruit additional resources to expand service options for Deaf and Hard of Hearing youth. ORS has added an additional provider, Perspectives, to develop additional summer employment options for youth with hearing loss.
- Expect training programs and CRP services to be gender neutral and open to all qualified customers regardless of age, race, and national origin
- Address the employment needs of elder-disabled customers through the Department of Elderly Affairs and West Bay Community Action Senior Employment Program
- Support employment opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities within the Developmental Disabilities (DD). Historically, DD services have focused on residential and social integration services. A system change strategy to increase employment outcomes for this population has been initiated. As an initial step in the process, a Request for Information (RFI) from stakeholders was sought by DD. ORS responded to this RFI and recommended a series of attitudinal changes, resource shifts, and training strategies that need to occur in order to make employment in integrated settings, a reality for individuals with significant disabilities. ORS also offered to be part of the review team for the Request for Proposals, the next step in the system change plan by DD.

**PERFORMANCE WITH RESPECT TO EVALUATION, STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE**

## **INDICATORS**

- Utilize I&E funds to support the projects of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) as well as orienting and training new members on the SRC
- Development of the State Plan by the SRC and ORS as well as the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment is supported by I&E funds
- Acquisition of a new computer system that will integrate case management, MIS and billing functions is pending state approval
- Assist the RI Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) in their role of monitoring the state plan and jointly developing, with ORS, their next three-year plan

**ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.11(e)(2)**

**EVALUATION AND REPORT OF PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING IDENTIFIED GOALS AND PRIORITIES AND USE OF TITLE I FUNDS FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES**

**GOAL #1: TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES**

- Increased the number of successful outcomes annually and continued to meet Standard One of performance and indicator standards. However, ORS needs to amend its 5% annual increase in goals due to several variables. Given staff vacancies, state fiscal constraints and a focus on increasing quality employment outcomes as per our C.N.A, the new goal is described in Attachment 4.11(d). ORS exceeded the 2007 goal of 736 successful outcomes by 9 to 745. The goal for 2008 is 746 successful outcomes. As a result of RSA monitoring in 2007, ORS set goals for quality outcomes and increasing transition outcomes. These are reflected in the 2009 goals and objectives.
- Provided semi-annual Employment Trainings organized by the Workforce Development Supervisor to ORS Counselors. Trainings topics included online applications, medical careers, post-secondary opportunities, labor market information, and trade apprenticeship programs.
- Obtained information about the changing labor market from 21 employers at the December meeting of the ORS Business Advisory Council. In addition, ORS provided information to the Advisory Council about assistive technology.
- Provided six interviewing skill workshops, with class size ranging from five to fifteen participants, to increase customer's ability to move toward self-sufficiency by being an

- active participant in their job search
- Implemented a workshop for customers on the use and completion of online applications which are increasingly being used as a business standard. Two workshops have been offered with the result that participants are obtaining more interviews and implementing a more active job search in a difficult job market. ORS counselors also received this training.
  - Provided Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) to recipients of SSI and SSDI through an agreement with Social Security Administration (SSA). To efficiently outreach to individuals and organizations, general information sessions were offered at the netWORKri locations. WIPA staff provided individual analysis on work incentives.
  - Reinforced the importance of addressing transportation issues early in the rehabilitation process by adding additional travel training vendors. This resulted in 34 individuals receiving travel training in 2007.
  - Participated in the Rhodes to Independence Job Fair which was attended by several hundred individuals
  - Advocated for expansion of statewide public transportation routes to increase services and flexible schedules to enable customer employment. Also, the SRC has a Transportation Subcommittee, which is exploring strategies to overcome transportation barriers.
  - Increased its training options by adding 6 short-term training vendors. The trainings that are developed reflect current labor market needs as well as customer interest.
  - Sponsored a strategic planning day with all staff as part of the ORS Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment

- Participated with the Governor's Commission on Disabilities (GCD) in meeting with college and university disability coordinators and career services to develop strategies to increase employment outcomes for college graduates with disabilities. Provided work incentives information to college personnel
- Participated in five Governor's Commission on Disabilities (GCD) Public Forums
- Established opportunities for college students receiving Disability Services to meet with ORS Counselors to learn about ORS services
- Coordinated a meeting between ORS Counselors and the Career Services and Disability Services of the New England Institute of Technology in order to more effectively work with students with disabilities
- Used I&E funding for an establishment grant to Goodwill Industries to create a new pattern of service for short-term job coaching. The grant ended and has been replaced with a fee-for-service structure.
- Provided labor market training to some ORS staff in order to better understand occupations with higher wages, occupational demands and number of annual openings.
- Utilized Supported Employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities as a successful strategy for job retention. ORS continues to work with both the Division of Developmental Disabilities and Division of Behavioral Health Services in examining best practices and track outcomes. Redesign of both DD and Behavioral Health programs is occurring due to the state fiscal situation.
- Used I&E funds in 2007 and 2008 for technical assistance and training of Supported Employment Community Rehabilitation vendors through the Sherlock Center at Rhode Island College.

- Developed additional relationships with employers by participating in Business Expos, several Chambers of Commerce, Rhodes to Independence Job Fair, and individual contacts. Employers participated in the ORS interviewing classes.
- Expanded the Business Advisory Council to 21 employers in 2008. The Council meets annually and updates ORS on the changing labor market.
- Participated on the Providence-Cranston Workforce Investment Board which focused its funding plan based on high demand occupations and associated Youth Councils
- Acknowledged employers who contributed to successful outcomes for ORS customers with an Employer Honor Roll breakfast. I&E funds were used in 2007 and will be used every other year to recognize employers for their contribution to successful employment and the advancement of individuals with disabilities towards increased independence and economic self-sufficiency.
- Utilized I&E funds for State Rehabilitation Council and State Independent Living Council activities
- Developed a 10-week social skills training group through Cove Center for Autism Spectrum Disorder. This program was so successful that it was expanded to address the needs of other disability groups.

**GOAL #2: TO INCREASE THE SERVICE AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME RATIOS FOR  
MINORITY POPULATIONS**

- Met the standard for services and employment outcomes for minorities who are disabled for FFY2007. In 2007, 15% of the successful employment outcomes represented minority customers.

- Developed and built strong relationships with community-based agencies and training programs including the area Tribal VR Program in order to provide quality employment outcomes for Native Americans
- Ensured equal access by minority communities to ORS services through input from the Cultural Diversity Cadre and monitoring of ORS compliance with Standard #2.1. The Cadre is involved in the development of new marketing materials, including an orientation presentation in several different languages.
- Created numerous innovative services to address the needs of Rhode Island's significant Latino population. ORS hired two bilingual staff to provide services in Spanish. The Spanish version of the Career Scope was provided to customers by the ORS bilingual Case Aid.
- Assisted in program development and funded literacy evaluations at Progreso Latino. Progreso Latino assisted ORS by providing staff at an Interviewing Skills Workshop. They also provide comprehensive services, including case management and crisis intervention, to assist individuals in reaching their employment goals.
- Added a bi-lingual vendor to provide job development and placement assistance. As an ORS vendor, PARI Independent Living Center provides independent living evaluations in Spanish.
- Provided clinical supervision to a Doctoral Student working with Native American customers
- Participated in reviewing proposals for both WIA and Governor's Workforce Board youth service initiatives. The funding targeted all youth, but ORS contributed expertise in evaluating the proposals for strategies to address youth with disabilities

- Contributed to the Shared Vision for Youth pilot states. Rhode Island is one of the sixteen states awarded a system change grant. This initiative is intended to develop a coordinated infrastructure between state and federal agencies in providing services to the highest risk youth. Many of these youth are minorities. Youth with disabilities and Native American youth are specifically targeted. ORS is developing a more effective interagency collaboration that includes leveraging and braiding funds to provide identified services. The project team, which includes ORS, is in the implementation stage. This stage involves identifying 50 youth who will be offered an assessment, barrier-free access to services, and assistance in moving toward employment.

**GOAL #3: TO INCREASE CUSTOMER CHOICE AND SATISFACTION**

- Demonstrated commitment to customers' right to informed choice and satisfaction by updating multiple policies to reflect the value of customer choice
- Trained new counselors, graduate student practicum and interns on informed choice
- Provided continued training to current vocational rehabilitation counselors in informed choice through clinical supervision
- Ensured that customers have an opportunity to develop an employment goal by utilizing CRPs and training programs based on customers' informed choice
- Increased customer choice through the addition of twenty community rehabilitation providers
- Developed new training programs in response to the expressed needs and interests of ORS customers and the labor market demands

- Provided a leadership role with the CRPs so that the intent and concept of informed choice integrated into all aspects of the rehabilitation process
- Promoted the value of informed choice in all of its publications and ensured that it is clearly reflected in its policies and procedures
- Incorporated information from RSA's 107 Monitoring Report as part of a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan based on customer choice and satisfaction

## **ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 6.3**

### **QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

Since the introduction of Supported Employment (SE), it has proven to be a valuable option for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Without supported employment services, employment would not be possible for many individuals with disabilities. For FFY 2007, out of the 745 successful outcomes, the twenty-two CRP vendors assisted ORS counselors in successfully placing 148 individuals with the most significant disabilities. The goal for FFY 2008, FFY2009, and FFY 2010 is to increase the number of successful outcomes, while increasing the number of hours employed and the hourly wage of individuals.

ORS continues to sponsor the use of Supported Employment Advisory Councils as a means of achieving our mutual successful employment goals. Through a contract awarded to the Sherlock Center, a member of their staff assists in organizing the council meetings and is Chair of one of the Councils. ORS Community Rehabilitation Program Supervisor and assigned ORS staff actively participate in both the Mental Health (MH) and the Developmentally Disabled (DD) Supported Employment Advisory Councils. In even greater efforts to share best practices, the first joint MH and DD Council meeting was held. This proved very successful, and as a result there are two joint meetings scheduled throughout FFY 2008. This venue is not only valuable to share technical and best practice information, but it is a good opportunity to do continued CRP vendor trainings.

The CRP Supervisor represents ORS on a regional planning committee, attends bi-annual steering committee meetings, and provides input on the training needs of CRP agencies in RI.

During FFY 2007, ORS assisted a few vendor agencies to work with underserved individuals with disabilities. ORS will continue this effort throughout FFY 2008, FFY 2009 and FFY 2010 by providing training, technical assistance, and adjusting fee schedules. Youth with Developmental

Disabilities is a population that ORS is targeting to increase vendor services. Several vendor agencies are developing summer vocational programs to give these youths an opportunity at career exploration. ORS is working with these agencies to develop the programs and to fund this initiative.

As mentioned in other sections of the State Plan, ORS is moving to an outcome-based system of service delivery for all vendors providing supported employment services. During FFY 2008 through FFY 2010, efforts to train ORS counselors and vendors on the Service Delivery Tier System will occur. We believe that this system will be less confusing for vendors and ORS counselors. It will provide a better flow of services to customers thus creating more successful outcomes.

The Cooperative Agreement between The Department of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals (MHRH) and DHS/ORS continues to demonstrate intra-agency cooperation and commitment to provide supported employment services.

ORS continues to provide a commitment to supported employment services. Counselors plan for and include supported employment services in an individual's plan for employment. These plans are very individualized and generally define the scope and time limit of each supported employment service. This plan also identifies the vendor who will continue to provide support services to the individual with a disability on a long-term basis. This shift in service delivery responsibility is well coordinated by the ORS counselor and vendor agency staff so that there will be a seamless and continuous delivery of needed services to the individual.



