

**2014 FEDERAL STATE PLAN FOR
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES**

Final- Approved

**FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2014
October 1, 2013 - September 30, 2014**

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
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2014 STATE PLAN Final Draft
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (FLDOE)
DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR)

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Attachment 4.2 (c): Summary Input Provided by the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) Comments

The Florida State Rehabilitation Council (FRC) and Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR, also known as the Designated State Unit - DSU) continue to collaborate in strategic partnership to strengthen outreach, service and support systems. FRC members representing all standing committees formed a State Plan Task Force to study the draft 2014 state plan. Each of these feedback areas were obtained in collaboration with VR. FRC members used information gathered from the following areas to help formulate their review of the state plan:

- Public meeting comments from FRC forums held throughout the year
- Customer Satisfaction Survey results
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Report
- VR Employee Climate Survey
- FRC quarterly updates

The FRC developed their recommendations at the May 2013 quarterly meeting for the 2014 state plan. The Council then discussed its observations and suggestions with the VR director's appointed representative, Dr. Steve Collins, Bureau Chief of Planning and Performance. The result was unanimous Council approval to accept the Florida 2014 state plan with the FRCs recommendations.

Council recommendations are provided below:

Recommendation 1: Transition

Transition services are a critical area of employment success for many individuals and the Council wants more students to have access to VR services. Based on discussions and customer feedback the FRC encourages:

- When possible, include healthcare management skills in transition discussions and planning to reduce lost customer productivity in school and work.
- Develop a systematic statewide process to ensure that evaluations and assessments completed by schools, VR, and the healthcare sector are integrated into the Summary of Performance document that is prepared for all students with individual educational plans who are exiting public school. This document is required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004), Section 614(c)(5) and could be further developed and shared across systems. Over time, this may increase efficiency within systems by avoiding waste, loss of evaluation data, duplication of services and decrease delays in providing services.

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The FRC is concerned about the current third party agreements ending and the future direction of transition services. Clear communication of this change must be provided to service providers and customers.

The FRC believes that VR is a critical partner in the future development of post-secondary education and encourages the agency to search out additional opportunities to expand outreach, coordination and service delivery. The FRC encourages growth in career technical tracks for persons living with disabilities as well as options within career technical schools.

The Council encourages VR to consider and develop additional Innovation and Expansion Grants to address the need for transition services.

The Council is very interested in the future outreach and sharing from VR about new plans and opportunities to serve the working adults of tomorrow.

Agency Response:

VR is currently exploring additional options that could lead to more effective transition services. VR will continue to collaborate with key stakeholder groups and partners to explore new transition services options and enhance service delivery to students. VR will keep FRC and other stakeholders apprised of changes in the upcoming year. In addition, VR is conducting a major strategic project analyzing factors contributing to unsuccessful case closures, customer satisfaction, customer dissatisfaction, and program effectiveness, which will include analysis of transition services. This project will allow VR to better identify areas for improvement in its service delivery processes and areas where more outreach and advocacy are needed. VR will ensure that proper communication is provided to school districts in which third party cooperative arrangements will be discontinued in 2014.

Recommendation 2: Customer Services

There is a great need for VR to strengthen efforts when working with customers in a variety of areas.

- One area of concern voiced during public forums and communications received is the need to reduce the length of time it takes VR to pay for classes at institutes of higher education. Some of our customers and university officers encounter problems that often result in a loss of classes and require additional counselor and ombudsman representative time.
- The Council encourages VR to increase staff training in the areas of facilitation, communication, advocacy and collaboration with and for customers to promote efficient and effective services delivery.
 - Part of this staff training effort needs to include instruction on how to encourage customer self-advocacy and customer development of their

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Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The Council believes that this training may increase customer goal attainment and satisfaction and decrease the amount of time required for VR services.

- VR needs to establish clear communication policies and standards for leadership and staff when working with customers regarding counselor turnover or reassignments and the timely return of phone messages. These efforts will increase agency efficiency, improve customer plan completion, and raise customer satisfaction.

Agency response:

VR acknowledges FRC's concern and interest in ensuring that VR customers receive quality services. VR will consider aspects of timely payments to university systems and factors related to employee turnover as part of the major strategic project for analysis of factors contributing to unsuccessful case closures, customer satisfaction, customer dissatisfaction, and program effectiveness. The analysis will identify specific points in the process to be improved. Policy revisions, additions, and/or training will be provided following the analysis, if deemed beneficial for increasing program effectiveness and quality customer service.

Recommendation 3: Order of Selection

The Council is pleased with the efforts of VR to reduce the number of customers placed on the wait list, while increasing the total number served each year. FRC members were well received when reporting VR accomplishments to the 2013 Florida Legislative delegations. Legislators applauded VRs increasing number of customers served and the Return on Investment (ROI) or benefits returned to the state and federal government while in Order of Selection.

In alignment with Attachment 4.11 (b), Attachment 4.11 (c) (1) and Attachment 4.11 (c) (3) the FRC encourages VR to seek all opportunities to expand access to individuals on the Category 3 wait list, contingent upon the continued open access to services for individuals in Categories 1 and 2. The FRC will continue to advocate with VR to seek all opportunities to reduce the wait list responsibly. In conclusion, the FRC requests VR to review and discuss with the Council the effectiveness of the Information and Referral process offered to individuals on the wait list [per Section 101 (a) (5) (D) of the Act and 34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 361.36 (a) (3) (iv)].

Agency Response:

VR welcomes the FRC's request to collaboratively review and discuss the effectiveness of its Information and Referral process offered to individuals on the wait list. In addition, VR's current strategic plan includes multiple projects that are anticipated to positively impact VR service delivery processes. In particular, VR plans a comprehensive division-wide VR Management Report review, and rewrite of modules within VR's information system, which will address steps within the VR service system where process improvement efforts will have the greatest impact. VR appreciates recognition of efforts

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to further reduce the number of individuals on the wait list. As of May 1, 2013, 1,282 individuals with disabilities in Category 3 remained on the waiting list. VR anticipates that Categories 1 and 2 will remain open, and Category 3 will remain closed through FFY 2014.

Despite VR's anticipation that the Category 3 wait list will not open during FFY 2014, every effort is being made to minimize the wait list. As of May 1, 2013, VR had released 300 individuals from the wait list and VR is planning for an additional 100 individuals to be released bi-monthly for services for the remainder of FFY 2013, as well as in FFY 2014.

VR continues to focus on providing effective and efficient customer service. The upcoming strategic plan includes projects to improve vendor and contracted services, and to design an integrated approach to analyzing factors affecting customer success and satisfaction.

Recommendation 4: Supported Employment

It is evident to the Council that there is a need to clarify for stakeholders and legislative delegates the role of VR, what services the agency offers and the historical precedence of ninety (90) years of service to the state putting people living with disabilities to work. The Council is very pleased with VR's collaborative efforts regarding supported employment: to increase funding alternatives and the energized agency focus in this area. Based on discussion and customer feedback, the Council encourages:

- A systematic statewide program for training job coaches and direct service providers to ensure quality and efficient service standards and delivery
- Establishing a statewide registration and vendor process for job coaches to support the needs of customers who require assistance from a variety of agencies serving persons living with disabilities
- Developing standardized statewide qualification requirements for job coaches to ensure quality service provision
- National emphasis and inquiry into this area of employment supports so more individuals living with disabilities may become productive citizens

Agency Response:

VR has entered into cooperative agreements with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, the Department of Children and Families Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program, and other stakeholders to identify and arrange to provide supported employment and extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. This collaborative effort aims to maximize quality of service to ensure comprehensive and continuous employment services. Activities include collaborative planning and budgeting, and improvement of policies and procedures. Factors listed above from the FRC will be considered as part of the current activities.

In addition, VR's current strategic plan includes projects focused on improving vendor and contracted services. These projects are as follows:

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- 1.2.1. Implement background screening program.
- 1.2.2. Review and revise vendor management process.
- 1.2.3. Design and implement contract monitoring and fraud detection processes.
- 1.2.4. Conduct vendor outreach to increase available services for customers.
- 1.2.5. Expand vendor pool for employment and supported employment services.

Recommendation 5: Public Comment

There needs to be continued collaboration with VR and the Council on “Lessons Learned” regarding the involvement of public comment. The Council is appreciative of the VR support offered at all FRC public forums and the distribution of forum announcements; however, support varies across area offices within the state. VR and the Council plan to increase efforts to distribute electronically the forum announcements. VR is also encouraged to include discussion during Counselor training modules of the importance of soliciting, hearing and listening to the consumer voice.

Agency Response:

VR recognizes the support offered by its employees during public forums, and will continue to encourage all areas to attend public forums in their respective area. VR will also continue to encourage employees to share information about FRC with customers and stakeholders. In addition, VR will ensure collaboration with the FRC to strengthen systematic approaches for collecting public comments. Finally, FRC has been participating in New Counselor Training to inform employees of the FRC role, and how it can assist.

Recommendation 6: VR Communication and Collaboration with FRC and stakeholders

FRC members are appreciative and applaud the director for her reports to the Council and the regular VR employee newsletter. In alignment with federal mandates and best practice guides such as the 36th IRI the Council, must insist on a timeline to be established with VR as to when the FRC will receive and review draft state plan documents. Also requested is a regular summary update of anticipated changes and discussion of such changes before they happen, not upon state plan development and review. The purpose of this recommendation is to increase the opportunities for consumer and stakeholder input and understanding of the state plan while strengthening collaborative efforts.

Communication from VR to the Council of collaborative efforts is an important component that needs to be strengthened. Sharing information with the FRC regarding mandated coordination and work with other stakeholder Councils (i.e., Agency for Persons with Disabilities, The Able Trust and the Governor’s Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities) is imperative to reduce replication and strengthen service quality and delivery to the people of the state. An additional area of action by and information requested from VR involves the participation in and partnering with stakeholders during the meetings, directives and outcomes of the Department of Management Services (DMS) workshops. These DMS meetings are being conducted

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with all state agency human resource officers who may be interested in hiring and understanding the VR program.

Agency Response:

VR recognizes the need for strong collaboration with all stakeholders. VR will continue to provide quarterly updates on stakeholder collaboration to FRC during the quarterly director's report.

VR intends to collaborate with FRC to hold an after-action-review and planning meeting to improve the next planning cycle. Action plans and a highly-structured process will be developed, which will ensure continued improvements in the strategic planning cycle.

VR will continue its representation on aforementioned councils and workgroups, as well as sharing information to promote employment of individuals with disabilities during DMS workshops.

Recommendation 7: Outreach

Outreach is an important and needed component when working with our customers, employers, and stakeholders as highlighted in federal code, literature, public contact, Ombudsman's reports and the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. The FRC emphasizes the need to expand outreach and rural access to services while encouraging self-advocacy. Some areas of FRC concern include serving the migrant worker and Native American populations in the state as well as improving services for transition-aged individuals and students from school to work. The Council and VR will continue to engage, recruit, and recognize business leaders across the state to promote employing all persons living with disabilities.

Agency Response:

The previously mentioned integrated analysis of factors affecting service delivery will greatly aid VR's outreach and partnering efforts by identifying areas where more targeted outreach is necessary. VR shares the council's concern for expanding services to those currently underserved or unserved. VR is fully committed to continued recognition of Florida's business leaders who promote the employment of individuals with disabilities.

Recommendation 8: Counselor Recruitment and Staff Development

In alignment with Attachment 4.10, the FRC applauds VR's efforts to encourage personnel development and training for division staff. With many universities eliminating their Institutions of Higher Education for Rehabilitation Counseling programs, VR is having difficulty finding qualified counselors. Because of this, the FRC encourages VR and the Rehabilitation Services Administration to seek opportunities to fund additional training options and address this national issue. In addition, the Council encourages the development of a Rehabilitation Baccalaureate program within the Florida system of higher education institutes. Florida Governor Rick Scott's approval of raises is appreciated but to strengthen employee retention efforts the FRC encourages further

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strategic planning in partnership with VR on alternative recruitment and retention efforts because high employee turnover is impacting customer service and satisfaction levels.

Agency response:

VR will continue to analyze counselor turnover, and will conduct a study on the effectiveness of its exit interview process. In addition, VR's upcoming strategic plan includes a project to design and implement a process to onboard, mentor, train, and provide career pathing and leadership development support to all VR employees. VR will continue to collaborate with other stakeholder groups to look for alternative approaches for expanding the formal training of VR counselors, since this is occurring nationwide.

Recommendation 9: National Involvement

In alignment with Attachment 4.11 (c) (1), the FRC recognizes the need for networking and collaboration with other state rehabilitation councils on a national level to share processes that can enhance VR services. The FRC appreciates VR's continued support of and funding for national involvement and participation in vocational rehabilitation areas of concentration. Also appreciated are the opportunities and funding to participate in the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils and Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation committees and conferences. The FRC also applauds VR's sharing of best practices and effective evaluation processes with other agencies and partners both statewide and nationally.

Agency Response:

VR appreciates being recognized for national involvement on key issues. These opportunities have allowed employees to represent Florida VR and share best practices with other VR agencies. VR also receives best practices from other agencies. VR will continue to collaborate and build partnerships with its national stakeholders, as well as support the FRC in its national involvement efforts.

Recommendation 10: FRC Membership

In alignment with criteria set forth in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.17, the FRC continues to focus on meeting FRC membership regulations. Discussions, correspondence, and meetings with the Florida Governor's Appointment Office are ongoing and a top priority in partnership with VR. At the time of the 2014 State Plan Task Force meeting held in May 2013, the Council had just received 10 new members or reappointments, thus increasing the number of stakeholders officially represented on the Council. The FRC appreciates VR's continued support to maintain the federally mandated membership requirements.

Agency Response:

VR will continue to support and collaborate with the FRC in its focus to meet membership regulations as set forth in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act, and 34 Code of Federal Regulations 361.17.

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In closing, the FRC will continue to work cooperatively with VR in strategic partnership to support efforts to improve and expand opportunities for persons with disabilities to enter into and maintain gainful employment.

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Attachment 4.7 (b) (3): Request for Waivers of Statewidness

Overview

The Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provides services throughout the state, including School to Work Transition services that expand and improve vocational rehabilitation options for eligible customers. VR has entered into Third Party Cooperative Arrangements in some political subdivisions, but services are not currently available in all areas of the state. The State Plan cannot assure that the expanded services provided through the Third Party Cooperative Arrangements will be available in all political subdivisions of the state as required in 34 CFR 361.25. A Waiver of Statewidness is requested in this State Plan in accordance with 34 CFR 361.26 and 34 CFR 361.28 (b).

Types of Services Provided

School and Community-Based Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

VR offered the Third Party Cooperative Arrangement in October 2006 to Florida's 67 school districts. The three-year (state fiscal years) arrangement provides community-based work experiences to eligible students who have VR transition service needs identified in their Individual Educational Plan and Individualized Plan for Employment. VR gave interested school districts another opportunity from January 2007 until June 2008 to enter into an arrangement that would end on June 30, 2010. Due to Order of Selection, new arrangements for providing services during school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 were not available.

VR has reviewed the effectiveness of these agreements and opted not to expand to additional school districts. Existing agreements will be allowed to expire in June 2014. Research and planning efforts are currently underway to develop and implement a different model that will allow VR to better serve eligible transitioning students.

Written Assurances

VR assures the Rehabilitation Services Administration that the Division has Third Party Cooperative Arrangements with some school districts and will provide written assurances as required. Specifically, each arrangement is formalized through the VR procurement contracting process and contains the following:

1. The local school district will certify to VR that funds used for match funds are non-federal and are not used for match in any other federally or state assisted project or program.
2. VR approval will be obtained for all Third Party Cooperative Arrangement services.

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3. VR will assure that all local school districts with Third Party Cooperative Arrangements will abide by the state's Order of Selection policy.
4. VR will assure that the Division will comply with 34 CFR 361.28(a) (1) and (a) (2).
5. All other state plan requirements will apply to all services provided under the scope of the arrangement.
6. VR will assure that program expenditures and staff providing services under the cooperative arrangement are under the administrative supervision of Florida VR.

Third Party Cooperative Arrangement

During state fiscal year 2012-13, VR had arrangements with the school districts in the following counties:

1. Baker
2. Bay
3. Bradford
4. Calhoun
5. Columbia
6. Flagler
7. Gadsden
8. Gulf
9. Hendry
10. Holmes
11. Leon
12. Manatee
13. Monroe
14. Nassau
15. Pasco
16. Taylor
17. Volusia
18. Wakulla
19. Walton

The current agreements will expire on June 30, 2014.

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Attachment 4.8 (b) (1): Cooperation with Agencies Not Under the Workforce Investment System

Cooperation with agencies and other entities not carrying out activities under the Workforce Investment System includes agreements with The Able Trust, Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind, Division of Blind Services, Mental Health Program Office, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and others. As of FFY 2006, the State Rural Development Council no longer operates in Florida (National Rural Development Partnership, 2006).

The Able Trust

The mission of The Able Trust is to assist citizens with disabilities in the vocational rehabilitation process. This includes administering grants, as well as educational and public awareness programs. The recipients of vocational rehabilitation program services and other Floridians with disabilities receive direct support through funded community rehabilitation program employment projects and individual client grants from The Able Trust. The Able Trust is a non-profit corporation that relies upon contributions and gifts. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) does not provide any Title I funds to The Able Trust. The agreement between the Able Trust and VR promotes cooperation between The Able Trust and the designated state unit. This includes, as provided for in Florida Statutes, the submission of The Able Trust's annual budget, annual report, annual audit, and any changes to the Articles of Incorporation or by-laws to the division's director. The VR director is to be informed of all board meetings, as required by Florida statute. VR reviews the above documents and makes the necessary certification, based on statute. This agreement is currently in effect through June 30, 2014.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities

This cooperative agreement between the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and VR contains a detailed and specific focus on collaborative planning and funding of Supported Employment services. Specifically, the agreement addresses the transition of secondary students to the community, to provide a seamless transition of services. The cooperative agreement includes local strategies and joint obligations for implementation.

Both agencies have a common goal of enabling eligible persons to achieve greater independence through employment. The goal of this agreement is to provide coordination of support and services throughout the state to ensure that maximum client satisfaction and informed choice is maintained.

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Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program, Florida Department of Health

VR and the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program have agreed to expand referrals between the two agencies in order to improve employment outcomes for persons with a traumatic brain or spinal cord injury. The effort will include joint statewide training for those involved in the project and identification of local referral liaisons.

Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Inc.

VR and the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Inc. agree to share specific information about their customers to optimize service delivery. Both agree to specific procedures that facilitate the delivery of services to their respective and mutual consumers. Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology offers an Alternative Financing Program for the purchase of assistive technology to all residents of Florida who have disabilities.

Florida Independent Living Council, Inc.

VR coordinates with Florida Independent Living Council, Inc., and the Centers for Independent Living throughout the state. Through memoranda of agreement, VR provides funding, outlines roles and responsibilities, and ensures cooperative planning.

Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind

VR and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind agree to cooperate in serving students and customers who are deaf or hard of hearing, and in establishing transition meetings. Activities have been implemented to increase public awareness of programs serving these customers and to improve transition between the school and local counselors.

Florida Small Business Development Center Network

Coordination with this network is carried out at the local level on a case-by-case basis. VR customers who are seeking self-employment can use a Business Planning Team. A representative from the Small Business Development Center Network can serve on such teams to help VR's customers assess their potential for self-employment and analyze the various issues that need to be taken into account.

Institutions of Higher Education

VR has Memoranda of Understanding with the Presidents of Florida's public universities and the Florida College System. Both Memoranda outline the purposes, roles and responsibilities of VR and the educational institutions, as well as, financial and programmatic responsibilities. The Memoranda of Understanding provides information regarding financial assistance, sharing of assessment findings, accommodations, rehabilitation technology services, academic advisement, counseling, confidentiality, and other topics.

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The Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe

The Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe is located in south GA and is the recipient of the Federal Section 121 Grant under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. There is not a 121 program in Florida. However, FL VR and the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe have a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate services for eligible Native Americans with disabilities residing on or near the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe Tama Reservation within a 150 mile radius. The agreement outlines the responsibilities of both groups, including services for joint consumers and technical assistance.

Mental Health Program, Florida Department of Children and Families

VR has extensive coordination efforts to assist customers who have mental illnesses. One of these is participation on the Florida Assertive Community Treatment Team, a community-based, outreach-oriented method of delivering services to individuals with mental illnesses coordinated by the Mental Health Program. VR provides staff liaisons with many of these teams to help serve this group of customers in a comprehensive manner. In addition, VR is an active member of the State Mental Health Planning Council of Florida. The cooperative agreement promotes coordination so that appropriate services can be delivered to maximize customer choice and satisfaction.

Division of Blind Services, Florida Department of Education

Both VR and Blind Services serve individuals with visual impairments. This agreement specifies the roles and responsibilities of each division, including those for individuals with one-eye pathology, bilateral visual impairment, multiple disabilities, and for individuals who are deaf-blind.

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Florida Department of Education; Division of Blind Services; Florida Department of Health; Agency for Workforce Innovation

The Florida Interagency Agreement for the Transfer of Assistive Technology, signed in 2006, establishes a framework for a more efficient transition of technology as individuals with disabilities move through the continuum from educational services to employment. Specifically, the agreement ensures children and youth with disabilities and their families, educators, and employers are informed about the continued use and transfer of assistive technology devices. These devices may remain with the person as he or she moves from home to school and to post-school activities in order to assist in meeting transition needs. The agreement outlines the conditions for coordination, the authority for transfer of property by local education agencies, financial responsibilities, and other topics.

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Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, Employment Standards Administration

Both agencies agree to further the common goal of providing (VR) equal employment opportunities and protecting against discrimination. VR will provide expertise on matters relating to disability issues and employment, cross-referral of individuals with disabilities, and will participate in interagency training programs, staff meetings, and conferences. Both agencies agree to a coordinated public outreach effort.

Prison Rehabilitative Industries and Diversified Enterprises, Inc. (PRIDE)

VR uses the services and manufactured items produced in correctional work programs through PRIDE. PRIDE is a Florida corporation that provides these goods and services as a state-use contracting program. A similar product or service of comparable price and quality, found necessary for use by a state agency, may not be purchased from a source other than PRIDE. In addition, contracts between VR and any private vendor require all items be purchased through PRIDE. This is consistent with Section 946.515, Florida Statutes.

Rehabilitation Foundation of Northwest Florida

The purpose of this agreement is to maximize funding of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with physical disabilities residing in northwest Florida. The Foundation contributes \$25,000 to VR toward meeting its non-federal share requirements in 34 CFR 361.60. In turn, VR will allocate an additional \$92,250 in federal funds to match the Foundation's contribution for vocational rehabilitation services in the following northwest Florida counties: Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton.

The intent of these cooperative efforts is to increase the services leading to quality competitive employment outcomes that are responsive to the strengths, resources, interests, and capabilities of individuals with disabilities residing in northwest Florida. VR agrees to provide quarterly reports of expenditures to the Foundation's Trustees. Each report will include the number of individuals served and a description of services provided under the terms of the agreement.

Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Act

One of VR's ongoing objectives for the Ticket to Work Program is to increase the number of partnerships with Employment Networks (Employment and Rehabilitation Service Providers). VR hopes to expand the resources available to customers to meet the current and future levels of demand. It is also the goal of VR to ensure that customers have a choice in service providers available within their communities. Also, VR has implemented an Employment Network Referral and Partnership Agreement that creates more opportunity to develop partnerships with Employment Networks. The agreement features a transitional approach by assisting Social Security Administration

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customers in their efforts to achieve self-sufficiency through core VR services followed by ongoing support services from employment networks. During the 2013-2014 year, VR will monitor the Agreement's effectiveness in meeting the previously stated goal.

United States Department of Veterans Affairs

The need to serve Florida veterans who have disabilities led to the development of an agreement between the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and VR. The agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of VR and the Department of Veterans Affairs. It clarifies which agency can provide specific services. It also includes information regarding shared planning, joint activities, and coordination.

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

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) updated the interagency agreement coordinating transition services with state education officials in July 2006. It is a state-level agreement, including agencies charged with providing transition services to students leaving high school and going to postsecondary education/training, support services, and/or employment. The agencies listed below agree to meet regularly to share information, ideas and current initiatives, collaborate on training and special projects, cooperate in planning and budgeting, and generally support any areas of work that are mutually beneficial. Agencies that support this “way of work” are:

- Florida Department of Education:
 - Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
 - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
 - Division of Blind Services
- Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- Florida Department of Health, Children’s Medical Services
- Florida Department of Children and Families, Mental Health Services

This formal interagency agreement serves as a transition services model for improved collaboration, communication, coordination, and cooperation among local education agencies and local offices of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Blind Services, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Children’s Medical Services, and Mental Health Services.

VR continues to dedicate a VR program administrator who is the central point of contact for the VR School to Work Transition Program. The administrator serves as the liaison for the 67 school districts and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. This position coordinates and plans for effective transition services delivery with VR’s staff and external stakeholders statewide. The administrator is responsible for training internal staff and making presentations about VR transition services at conferences statewide in an effort to increase understanding and awareness of the agency’s role in assisting eligible students with disabilities.

Additionally, the VR administrator provides transition-related technical assistance to the Florida Rehabilitation Council. The administrator serves as a representative on the State Secondary Transition Interagency Committee and works closely with the regional representatives of Project 10: the Transition Education Network. Project 10 is funded through a grant from the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services within the Florida Department of Education to the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg. Project 10 helps Florida school districts and stakeholders increase their ability to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and postsecondary outcomes. Project 10 helps educators, parents, students, agency representatives, and others interested in Florida’s transition efforts by providing capacity building to implement secondary transition services,

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interagency collaboration, transition legislation and policy, and student development and outcomes. VR counselors serving transition students participate in each area's local interagency councils. The interagency councils are a collaborative effort between VR and Department of Education partners, public high schools, adult service agencies, workforce programs, parents, students, advocates, and employers working together to meet the transition needs of students with disabilities.

The VR Director or designee serves on the State Advisory Committee (SAC) for the Education of Exceptional Students. This committee is administered by the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), within the Department of Education. The SAC includes parents of children with disabilities, individuals with disabilities, educators and administrators from secondary and postsecondary institutions, foster care and juvenile justice representatives, and representatives of various state agencies that provide transition and other services to children, youth and young adults with disabilities. The committee advises the state education agency on what children with disabilities need and helps them develop corrective action plans to address findings in related federal monitoring reports. The committee also helps the state education agency develop evaluations and policies, implement policies, and report data. The committee may comment publicly on rules and regulations proposed by the state relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.

VR adopted an early referral/application process for transition students during SFY 2008-2009 to better coordinate with the state education agency and local education agencies. Brochures for the VR School to Work Transition Program are made available to students and families so that they can begin gathering information at age 14. Referrals for VR services are made at age 16 for those students with disabilities that are engaged in community-based work experiences or in the last two years of secondary school for other students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who are at high risk for dropping out of school may be referred at any age. This additional time allows the counselor to develop a rapport with the transition student and family, explore vocational options and comparable benefits, and begin necessary guidance and counseling.

Provisions for Development and Approval of Individualized Plans for Employment for Students with Disabilities

The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), Supported Employment IPE, Individual Support Plan, and/or Care Coordination Plans are completed or updated as early as possible prior to graduation or leaving school to allow a seamless transition to a student's desired postsecondary outcome.

VR counselors, with assistance from VR technicians, are assigned as representatives to work with all public high schools statewide and any private high school requesting assistance. They provide outreach and vocational rehabilitation services orientation to students, school officials, parents, and others involved in transition services. Only the VR counselor may determine a student's eligibility for VR services, develop an approved IPE, and sponsor the delivery of necessary transition services to assist the

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student with planning, preparing for, and attaining successful postsecondary employment.

Information on Formal Interagency Agreements with Respect to:

Technical Assistance and Consultation

Local education agencies are strongly encouraged to have written agreements with VR, the Division of Blind Services, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services staff. The agreement addresses consultation, coordination, and the provision of technical assistance to each other, as well as to students and their families/guardians/surrogates so they can plan for the transition from high school to postsecondary activities and becoming part of the adult community.

Transition Planning by Personnel of the Designated State Agency and Educational Agency for Development and Completion of the Individual Educational Plan

Local education agencies work collaboratively with VR, the Division of Blind Services, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services in the Transition Individual Educational Plan process. Local education agencies that are considering transition services during the Individual Educational Plan meeting will invite representatives from any other agency who may be responsible for providing or paying for transition services, after obtaining permission from the parent, guardian or age of majority student. If the agency representative does not attend the meeting, the school will do its best to get someone else to come. If the agency representative will not attend the meeting, the school will then look for alternative ways to provide for the student's transition needs. The local education agency must reconvene the Transition Individual Educational Plan team to identify alternative strategies for providing a student's transition needs if an agency fails to do so.

In order to plan effective transition services for students with disabilities, it is essential that all invited partner agencies encourage and support participation in the Transition Individual Educational Plan process.

VR invests 20 to 25 percent of its statewide staffing resources to transition services to serve students with disabilities in Florida's 67 school districts and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. Additional improvements to the Rehabilitation Information Management System for transition students' data collection have been requested. When this enhancement is completed, VR will be able to analyze differences between the transition students with disabilities who have an Individual Educational Plan, 504 Education Plan and those without postsecondary educational plans. In SFY 2009-2010, when updates were made to the Ombudsman's tracking system, revisions were also made to the transition coding to assist with continuous improvement of the VR School to Work Transition Program.

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Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for each partner agency as required by federal and state regulations are as follows:

1. Local education agencies provide free and appropriate public education for students with disabilities, including preparation for transition from school to work or other postsecondary activities.
2. VR and the Division of Blind Services assist with student transition from secondary school to work through postsecondary training, education, or direct placement services necessary to attain a successful employment outcome.
3. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities endeavors to "reduce the use of sheltered workshops and other noncompetitive employment day activities and promote opportunities for gainful employment for persons with developmental disabilities who choose to seek such employment," (Chapter 393, Florida Statutes). Additionally, Chapter 393, Florida Statutes states that "to promote independence and productivity, the agency shall provide support and services, within available resources, to assist clients enrolled in Medicaid waivers who choose to pursue gainful employment." If an individual is eligible for Agency for Persons with Disabilities' waiver services and employment is a needed service, then this service must be provided to meet standards as outlined in Florida rule.
4. Children's Medical Services ensures a smooth and successful transition process to adult healthcare services and providers for youth and young adults with special healthcare needs.
5. Mental Health Services, in partnership with families and the community, provides a system of care that enables children and adults with mental health or emotional disabilities to successfully live in the community, become self-sufficient or to attain self-sufficiency at adulthood, and realize their full potential. Mental health support and services enable adults and transitioning students to participate in community activities such as employment and other valued community roles.

Specific Purpose

Specifically, it is intended that the interagency agreement:

1. Provide guidance to the local education agencies, VR, the Division of Blind Services, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services' front-line staff, when serving students transitioning from school to work or postsecondary activities.
2. Provide information to parents/students so they know what they can expect from the local education agencies, VR, the Division of Blind Services, the Agency for

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Persons with Disabilities, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services during the transition process.

3. Provide parameters to the local education agencies, VR, the Division of Blind Services, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services' administrators/managers/nursing supervisors when developing, negotiating, and implementing local cooperative agreements.
4. Encourage and support the participation of all agency personnel in the IEP process at the local level through the development of guidelines, policies, and/or procedures.

Financial Responsibilities

The Department of Education, VR, the Division of Blind Services, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services are committed to meeting financial responsibilities as required by law. Agency/Division heads for the organizations will periodically identify areas for improved programmatic and financial efficiencies and develop strategies to meet financial responsibilities, including joint appropriations requests from the state legislature and negotiations with federal agencies. Each party is financially responsible for the services it provides under its own laws and rules.

Conditions and Terms of Reimbursement

If a non-education agency fails to provide or pay for services for which they are responsible, and which are also considered special education and related services, the local education agency (or state agency responsible for developing the child's Individual Educational Plan) shall provide or pay for these services to the child in a timely manner. The local education agency or state agency may then claim reimbursement for the services from the non-education agency that was responsible for the provision of the services and failed to provide or pay for these services, and that agency shall reimburse the local education agency or state agency in accordance with the terms of this agreement.

Procedures for Outreach to and Identification of Students with Disabilities who need Transition Services

Outreach and Identification of Students

Local education agencies are strongly encouraged to enter into written agreements with VR, the Division of Blind Services, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services staff, on the outreach methods used to inform to students with disabilities who may need, and could benefit from these agencies.

Brochures, flyers, website resources, presentations, transition fairs, or informational letters will be made available to the local education agency, students, and their parents

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or guardians, to explain the role that VR, the Division of Blind Services, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services programs play in the transition process, and the agencies' referral/application policies and procedures.

VR has executed 19 third party cooperative arrangements for State Fiscal Year 2012-2013. The goal of these arrangements is to create new or expand existing transition services with a vocational rehabilitation focus. The costs are shared between the agencies. In order for the cooperating agency to receive matching vocational rehabilitation dollars, they must provide a cash match of non-federal funds. Recipients of the third party cooperative arrangements began providing job coaching to eligible students with a Supported Employment IPE in SFY 2010-2011.

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

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has a variety of agreements with private non-profit organizations. These include contracts, rate agreements, and other cooperative, non-financial agreements.

Specifically, VR provides contracts for three core components: employment services, supported employment, and On-the-Job Training (OJT). Additionally, some VR services are purchased through registered vendors. All new vendors/providers, whether through a contractual or vendor relationship, must go through a registration and approval process. VR reviews the qualifications of vendors providing services to our clients in order to ensure the quality of these services, as well as the safety of the public. In addition to approving and registering vendor/provider services, VR conducts employment verifications on all client placements facilitated by vendors/contract providers.

VR's policy ensures that applicants and eligible individuals exercise choice of qualified service providers. Customers are also informed if the provider has employees experienced in working with special disability populations, foreign languages, and other communication skills. Eligible individuals have the choice of necessary services, service providers, and the setting in which to receive services in the written Individualized Plan for Employment.

Currently, VR combined rate contracts include employment, supported employment, and OJT in one contract, or individually, as requested by the contractor. VR has executed over 200 contracts for the three services. In addition to the aforementioned rate contracts, VR maintains the following contracts and/or agreements:

- 16 agreements with the Centers for Independent Living located throughout the state to provide independent living services
- 19 third party cooperative arrangements with local school boards are maintained
- 25 contracts with Employment Networks
- Additional contracts with agencies for providing services such as delegable VR services outreach for migrant and seasonal farm workers, interpreting services, and rehabilitation engineering

VR currently has two innovation and expansion projects. One of the projects involves the use of virtual reality simulators for customers with severe disabilities. The other project is with a non-profit organization providing vocational services and assistance for transitioning youth with most significant disabilities.

Additionally, VR has collaborative, non-contractual arrangements and agreements with non-profit organizations that provide referrals, other vocational rehabilitation services, and comparable benefits. For example, through coordinating with Centers for

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Independent Living, individuals with disabilities receive life skills training, employability skills training, and support such as transportation, clothing, and emergency funds.

Relationships with organizations that serve clients with hearing impairments provide opportunities for support groups, sign language classes, and placement assistance.

Throughout the state, many counselors are designated to serve as liaisons with specific groups and organizations. Individuals are referred to those groups if it is determined that they can benefit from their services. Services are coordinated with numerous non-profit hospitals and clinics for referrals and medical assistance. Numerous foundations and associations such as the Easter Seals Society, Muscular Dystrophy Association, National Kidney Foundation, Brain Injury Association of Florida, Epilepsy Foundation, Family Network on Disability of Florida, and others provide individual and family support groups and disability education to mutual clients.

It is the intent of VR to continue with the above referenced contractual agreements, cooperative arrangements, and liaison relationships through the 2014 Federal Fiscal Year.

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

The Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has entered into cooperative agreements with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities; Department of Children and Families, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program; and other stakeholders to identify and make arrangements to provide supported employment and extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Six broad-based objectives govern Florida's interagency supported employment programs.

1. Continue to develop and enhance supported employment for persons with the most significant disabilities. The state system for the provision of supported employment reflects: (a) mutually agreeable definitions of the services to be provided; (b) administrative responsibility of the intensive component of supported employment services to eligible individuals as the primary responsibility of VR for individuals with most significant disabilities; (c) administrative responsibility of the extended services component as the primary responsibility of other stakeholders including, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and the Department of Children and Families, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program.
2. Continue to improve the statewide management of supported employment programs by avoiding duplication of effort and funding, while ensuring accountability. This process will provide a coordinated system of program development for supported employment services. The process includes the coordination of statewide planning and request for proposal process, coordination of programmatic and fiscal responsibilities prior to beginning any new program, and promotion of consistency in funding, reporting, and monitoring.
3. Maximize the quality of service delivery ensuring a comprehensive, continuous, efficient and effective referral process, individual program planning, coordination of intensive vocational services with extended services, information collection and dissemination, confidentiality, and technical assistance.
4. Identify issues, policies, and practices that present systemic barriers to effective participation of individuals with most significant disabilities, and develop appropriate resolutions to remove such barriers.
5. Continue to implement an interagency planning process for budget coordination, which defines and projects the number of people in need of intensive and extended services for each fiscal year and facilitates program and fiscal planning.
6. Support the belief that all individuals with disabilities can work if provided appropriate services and supports and that a team approach is needed to facilitate quality and appropriate services.

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The Agency for Persons with Disabilities and VR are engaged in reviewing the current articulation agreement that exists between the two agencies. Input is solicited on needed updates to reflect any current issues in the service delivery system. The agreement will be updated as appropriate.

Supported Employment Services

VR is responsible for Phase One of Supported Employment Services. In Phase One, VR provides intensive vocational services until the individual and employer are satisfied with the supported employment placement and then the individual transitions to a plan for extended services. Supported employment services consist of intensive, time-limited vocational rehabilitation services (the responsibility of VR) and extended services, also known as Phase Two. Phase Two funding is provided by other funding sources that may be, but are not limited to, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, the Department of Children and Families Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program or other identified funding sources.

Extended Services

The purpose of the extended services is to maintain the individual in supported employment and enhance the individual's involvement in the workplace culture and career advancement. The nature of services provided during the intensive and extended services of supported employment may be similar to the initial services but may differ in intensity.

VR is working with its collaborative partners to identify alternative methods of providing extended services (e.g. social security incentives, natural supports, etc.). VR will try to secure funding for extended services for all individuals with most significant disabilities receiving supported employment services.

Allowances would be made for individuals who, while receiving extended services, require re-intervention of intensive services through VR because they have destabilized on the job. When appropriate, VR shall again assume the responsibility and cost of providing intensive vocational services, including necessary job-related support services.

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Attachment 4.10: Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

As of March 31, 2013, VR has 931 full-time equivalents (FTEs). Of this number, there are 413 counseling positions providing vocational rehabilitation services. Seventy-eight (78) supervisory and/or area level managerial positions support the counseling positions. There are 440 managerial/administrative, paraprofessional, technical, and administrative support positions. In addition to the 931 FTEs, there are 75 contracted positions providing VR services under state supervision. Forty-eight of those are counselors. As of March 31, 2013, VR's turnover rate increased from last year's average of 25.8 percent to approximately 27.4 percent for counseling positions. The turnover rate for field supervisors increased from 23.3 percent to 25 percent, while the turnover rate for program administration decreased from 7 percent to 4 percent. VR continues to employ strategies to address turnover.

Assurance of an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessional personnel is the major driver for VR's Human Resource Development Section. Data from numerous sources is used to determine current and projected needs, as well as VR's progress toward meeting them.

The state's automated People First personnel system maintains employment histories to help project human resource needs. The state continues to make available a deferred retirement option program (DROP) that allows individuals to continue working for the state for five years beyond their original retirement date. Because it is impossible to anticipate how many individuals will accept the deferral option, projecting future employment needs is difficult. However, it is known that there are currently 90 individuals in DROP, 78 individuals with 30 or more years of service, and 132 individuals over the age of 62.

VR collects data from the Rehabilitation Information Management System (RIMS) to calculate the counselor-client ratio. This is another tool for assessing current and projected staffing needs. The average counselor-client caseload is 125, in relation to assisting customers from the application phase to case closure. This ratio is based on both regular counselor positions and contracted counselor positions.

VR uses People First and RIMS data, as well as internal reports, to obtain:

- The number and classification of authorized positions for each local unit and state headquarters in relation to the number of individuals served
- The number and classification of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services
- The projected number and classification of personnel who will be needed in five years to provide vocational rehabilitation services
- The state institutions of higher education that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by program type

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- The number of students in each of these institutions, by program type
- The number of students graduating from each program and the credentials they have received

The average annual projected staffing requirements for the VR counselor and field supervisor positions are listed below. The projections for the VR counselor, field supervisor, and program administration positions are based on the aforementioned average turnover rates of 27.4, 25, and four percent.

<u>Job Group</u>	<u>Projected Annual Vacancies</u>
VR Counselor	113*
Field Supervisors	20*
Program Administration	18*

*This number is an annual average derived by multiplying the number of positions for the job group by the respective turnover rate.

Approximately 22-25 percent of the estimates above represent Transition Counselor needs. When population growth is factored in, the projected five-year staffing need is slightly higher than that noted above, but would require that VR be provided with additional FTEs, which is unlikely in the current economic climate.

In order to ensure the continuity of quality rehabilitation services and to address staff vacancies and turnover in particularly difficult to fill geographic areas, VR has contracted for staff. The contracts ensure that qualified personnel are hired to provide necessary rehabilitation services. These employees are supervised by a state VR supervisor or counselor/analyst who performs the activities that federal regulations (34 CFR 361.13) specify are the responsibility of the designated state unit (i.e., VR) and cannot be delegated to private providers. These activities include:

- All decisions affecting eligibility for VR, the nature and scope of available services and the provision of these services, and the suspension, reduction and termination of these services
- The determination to close the records of services of an individual who has achieved an employment outcome
- Policy formulation and implementation
- Allocation and expenditure of VR funds
- Participation as a partner in the one-stop service delivery system.

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Described below is information from institutions of higher education in Florida that prepare vocational rehabilitation professionals, categorized by institution and type of program.

Program Data for Institutions of Higher Education

Institution	Type of Program	Number and Type of Students Enrolled	Number of Graduates with Certification, Licensure, or Eligibility	Number of Graduates		
				Year 2013	Year 2014	Year 2015
Florida Atlantic University	Rehabilitation Training Program-Graduate Only	20 MEd 4 PhD	9 graduated in 2012, one was a PhD, 39 have graduated overall; all eligible for CRC and LMHC	9 MEd 1 PhD	10 MEd 1 PhD	11 MEd 1 PhD
Florida International University	MS in Counselor Education Rehabilitation Counseling Program	2 MS	4 (graduated 2011-2012)	2 MS	2 MS	3 MS
University of South Florida	Rehabilitation & Mental Health Counseling (MA)	167 Graduate students	51 All CRC & LMHC eligible	60 MA	60 MA	50 MA

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation, and Retention of Qualified Personnel

VR maintains close relationships with universities within and outside of the state, including minority institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and disability-specific organizations. VR staff serves on the Rehabilitation Advisory Committees of some of the university programs, collaborates with universities in securing grant funding, and use university staff to assist in training and education activities.

VR acknowledges that it will not be able to recruit an adequate number of qualified CRC rehabilitation counselors to replace those retiring and departing for other reasons. VR is currently engaged in activities indicated below to address recruitment, preparation, and retention of counselors.

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Personnel Standards

There is not a state-approved or recognized certification, licensure, or registration of Vocational Rehabilitation counselors. VR, in conjunction with the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) established the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) educational eligibility requirement as its standard.

Efforts are made to recruit and hire counselors who meet the CRC educational eligibility status. If VR is unsuccessful in finding enough qualified applicants, it will accept those who meet the minimal initial standard for individuals providing counseling and guidance services. The individual(s) must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited university and one year of experience counseling individuals with disabilities. Alternative majors other than social, behavioral, or rehabilitative science may be considered along with the minimum qualification requirements for the position. When evaluating the suitability of alternative majors, the hiring authority should consider the major area of study's applicability to the required knowledge, skills, and abilities. A master's degree from an accredited university in a social, behavioral, or rehabilitative science can substitute for the year of required experience.

Though VR hires counselors without the CRC, it prefers that counselors actually acquire the credential. As an incentive to do so, VR adds \$3,000 to the base pay of employees who obtain their certification. Approximately 48 percent of current personnel meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) standard. Those hired in 2007 or before who do not meet the standard had until 2012 to meet it. Individuals hired in subsequent years who do not meet the standard have five years to do so. Thus, individuals hired in 2013 will have until 2018 to meet the standard; those hired in 2014 will have until 2019, and so on.

State of Florida employees are permitted to use a tuition waiver to enroll in six hours (or less) of courses per semester on a space-available basis at public universities. This approach is how many counselors worked to reach the CSPD standard until fall 2006. As recently as five years ago, Florida had six Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC) programs, five of which were CORE-accredited. Florida is now down to two CORE-accredited programs (Florida Atlantic University and the University of South Florida) and one rehabilitation track program which is in the process of applying for CORE accreditation (Florida International University).

In recent years, VR has implemented a more aggressive approach to meeting the CSPD standard. A significant portion of the in-service training grant has been allocated solely to VR's CSPD activities. The tuition waiver program will continue to be used to the extent possible, as it represents a significant savings to VR. In-service training grant funds will be used to pay tuition for individuals who cannot get the coursework they need through the waiver program, such as those who are not near a public university or who otherwise cannot use the waiver program. In-service training grant funds are also allocated for textbook reimbursement. The Human Resource Development (HRD)

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Section has implemented a data system to track academic classes taken and progress toward certification eligibility.

In addition to the Florida public universities referenced above, VR also accesses the resources of Auburn University, Southern University, Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Kentucky, the University of Arkansas – Little Rock, the University of West Virginia and the University of Wisconsin-Stout, all of whom provide online Masters-level rehabilitation programs. VR also accesses the resources of the University of North Texas and San Diego State through the Consortium on Distance Education in Rehabilitation (CDER) program. VR will continue to access additional programs, as appropriate.

Staff Development

HRD efforts will continue to be oriented toward appropriate and adequate training for all personnel, with substantial in-service grant resources allocated to the CSPD effort. Although the in-service training grant is the main funding source for funding these activities, it is not sufficient to fund all staff development and training activities. Supplemental funds are provided from other budget resources.

Although there has been an emphasis on assisting counselors in meeting the CSPD standard and on developing the technical, managerial, and leadership skills of the supervisors and managers, staff development opportunities are provided to employees at every level.

VR continues to offer individual training allocations for each staff member. This allocation can be used for job-related professional development activities, such as attending conferences, purchasing books, CDs, DVDs or other materials; taking online short courses; or any other approved professional development activity. Supervisory approval is required for these professional development activities to ensure that staff participates in activities consistent with their individual needs and job responsibilities and requirements. The resources of the regional Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center are accessed, as available and appropriate.

The HRD Section coordinates an Annual Continuing Education Day (ACED) in each of the Areas and Headquarters, so employees at all levels will have the training and education needed to perform their job efficiently and effectively. In addition, local Area directors coordinate training within their respective areas to address local needs.

VR anticipated implementing a Learning Management System (LMS) in SFY 2011-2012, but implementation has been delayed due to information technology issues. However, those have been resolved and the purchasing process initiated. A recommendation was made and the purchase was approved in May 2013. It is anticipated that the LMS will be implemented, using a phased approach, during calendar 2013 and 2014. The system will not only track learning participation, but will also serve as a host for online learning activities for all employees. VR purchased

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licenses for WebEx, which is also used for training purposes. Every effort is made to ensure that the correct medium is used to address each particular issue. The ability to post interactive training on the LMS will greatly expand the capacity of VR to provide a more extensive and comprehensive array of learning activities for all employees.

VR produces a monthly newsletter for all employees, as well as a quarterly newsletter for supervisors to share information about what is happening in the different areas, keep them up to date on new policies and procedures, and offer articles that can help them do their jobs better.

Whether offered directly or contracted by the HRD Section, VR's staff development and training programs are designed with the goal of maintaining a well-prepared, competent workforce equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to successfully facilitate the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. VR is responsible for ensuring that employees, including contracted employees, receive necessary development and training. Accordingly, HRD includes contracted employees at all training programs.

Needs Assessment and Evaluation

A bi-annual training needs assessment is conducted using information from a number of sources. These include a formal needs assessment instrument, performance evaluation data, training evaluation sheets obtained from every sponsored program, exit interviews, and supervisory input. VR has implemented individual development plans for field service employees. HRD uses this information in assessing employee needs. The needs assessment data determines program development and modification.

Annual performance evaluations are conducted on each staff member, with intermittent evaluation, if indicated. Performance is evaluated according to standards and goals established at the beginning of the evaluation period. Employees are evaluated in the context of their knowledge, skills, and abilities within the field of rehabilitation, and on policy about priority of service to individuals with the most significant disabilities. If circumstances change, training and professional development activities are provided to help the employee meet his/her goal in support of VR's mission.

In-Service Training Grant

Funds are requested for the in-service training grant based on current and anticipated needs. VR continues to provide a variety of in-house training programs, including new counselor training, new counselor follow-up training, supervisory training, policy training, new legislation, casework review training, etc. VR anticipates offering eight new VR counselor training programs and seven new VR counselor follow-up programs each year, as well as numerous other programs, as needed.

In carrying out its staff development and training program, VR addresses several topics in its training curricula. The training curricula include (but are not limited to) modules on the following: preliminary assessment, eligibility determination, assessment, IPE development, vocational counseling (within the modules on eligibility determination and

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individualized plan for employment development), job placement, rehabilitation technology, cultural competence, ethics, supported employment, transition from school-to-work, medical and psychological issues, caseload management, and special programs.

VR places emphasis on the professional development of unit supervisors, area directors, and supervisors. Statewide supervisor training meetings are used to achieve this goal. Topics are selected based on policy or procedure changes, new initiatives, audit and review findings, and general professional development. Budgetary considerations have reduced the meetings to two per year.

Counseling and non-counseling employees, including administrative employees, will continue to be provided training in core subjects through distance and on-site learning. As caseloads grow, the role of the paraprofessional technician becomes more and more critical to the effective management of caseloads. All counseling staff will continue to work toward CRC eligibility and/or degrees in rehabilitation or counseling through tuition waivers and other mechanisms, and the in-service training grant.

Engineers from the Rehabilitation Technology Engineering Program, contracted through the University of South Florida, provide training on rehabilitation technology and engineering, and participate in centralized counselor training, as well as in-service training. The contract makes sure that rehabilitation technology engineers are available statewide.

State labor market information, as well as national data, provides information on the employment and advancement of qualified individuals with disabilities. Job announcements are published online through the People First website, providing access to all state jobs through one internet portal.

Manuals related to policy and rehabilitation information management are available online. Employees can access the internet to find information about medical and psychological conditions, rehabilitation technology, Federal/State Plan, legislation and regulations, and employment-related information.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

VR employees need to be able to work with Florida's diverse population. One way VR does this is to actively recruit counselors and support employees who have diverse backgrounds. VR places advertisements in ethnic newspapers and collaborates with local civic and social service groups. Bilingual individuals are on staff, but interpreters or translators will continue to be used when a counselor is unable to communicate directly with a customer in his/her preferred language. VR will continue to partner with local vendors to offer this service.

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American Sign Language interpretation needs are met using a combination of employee positions and arrangements with local interpreter service providers. In some areas, difficulty in hiring qualified individuals has led to positions being vacant for prolonged periods. In those situations, and to supplement needs beyond those that can be served by qualified VR employees, arrangements are in place with local providers for interpreter services. VR is considering two statewide pilot projects to assess whether they will help improve communication between VR employees and customers with hearing loss at select VR field offices. VR will purchase text and auditory communication devices and use video remote interpreting (VRI) services in situations when either staff interpreters or local interpreters are not available.

VR meets the Americans with Disabilities Act compliance by providing materials in Braille and large print, through having sign language interpreters and offering text-based communication access, including real-time translation (CART) services. In addition, VR arranges for foreign language translators when needed.

Coordination of Personnel Development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Presenters provide orientation and training for employees serving transition students with disabilities from VR, the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES), and transition partners. Cross-training between BEES and VR staff is emphasized through interagency agreements as presented in Attachment 4.8 (b) (2). The Department of Education's State Education Agency (SEA) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) profiles are used to gather important statistical information on graduation rates, dropout rates, Individual Educational Plan compliance, and postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. Additionally, BEES and VR continue to share and analyze student data to identify students with Individual Educational Plans who can benefit from VR services and any potential gaps in service.

VR strives to help LEAs meet the mandates of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. VR support includes offering an early VR referral and application process, VR Transition Staff Contact List, VR Transition Brochures, and coordination of the Individual Educational Plan with the Individualized Plan for Employment when served by both agencies. VR endorses evidence-based LEA services which benefit students with disabilities, including educating students in the least restrictive environment with their non-disabled peers and having access to the original curricula. VR counselors continue to attend regular in-service training that specifically targets school to work transition issues and helps meet the requirements of the CSPD.

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VR and transition partners continue to make presentations and participate in annual transition conferences to better serve students with disabilities by building capacity at the national, state, and local levels. These events allow for agency updates, contributing information on promising initiatives and sharing evidence-based best practices. When VR staff and local educators are assigned to teams at events, they use this time to discuss and learn from one another about transition practices and issues. This information is often incorporated into VR staff trainings. A transition training module is provided during New Counselor Follow-up Training which includes resources from the VR School to Work Transition Program. The VR School to Work Transition Guidelines and Best Practices guide is a resource for VR transition teams to assure statewide consistency in coordinating services to students with disabilities. VR employees have access to the “Effective Practices for Working with the School System” and the “Outreach for the School System” presentations developed to improve collaboration between VR and the LEAs. At the local level, VR employees participate in various interagency groups to improve local coordination and services to students, families, schools, employers, and agency partners.

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Attachment 4.11 (a): Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

During FFY 2010-2011, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) conducted a comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) to identify factors that affect VR customers' ability to get and keep jobs, and any barriers or limitations they may experience. The CSNA project consisted of five major components. Those components included state demographic profiles, customer surveys, a VR field staff survey, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups. Results of the CSNA were considered in developing the FFY 2013 State Plan. Those results continue to be considered in the development of the current 2014 State Plan, as well as the 2015 State Plan in the coming year.

FL VR conducts the required comprehensive needs assessment every three years. Attachment 4.11 (a), summarizing the results of the current needs assessment, was included with the FFY 2013 state plan, with an update to related goals and strategies in FFY 2014 State Plan Attachment 4.11 (e) (2). Results from the next CSNA are scheduled for inclusion in the 2016 State Plan.

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Attachment 4.11 (b): Annual Estimates

Number of Individuals in the State Who are Eligible for Services under this State Plan

According to the 2008-2010 American Community Survey Estimates for Florida, a total of 1,097,268 working age adults with an employment disability may qualify for vocational rehabilitation services.

Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served with Funds Provided Under Part B of Title I and Part B of Title VI of the Act

From October 1, 2013, through September 30, 2014, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) anticipates a workload of 61,498 individuals. Because of limited resources, VR has determined that vocational rehabilitation services cannot be provided to all individuals with disabilities in the state that apply for services. The following are projections for Federal Fiscal Year 2014.

The estimated numbers of eligible individuals to receive vocational rehabilitation services by priority category are:

Priority Category 1	35,952
Priority Category 2	24,690
Priority Category 3	<u>856</u>
Total	61,498

The estimated number to be served in Supported Employment (Part B of Title VI of the Act) is 6,000.

Cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation

The estimated costs for services for each priority category are:

Priority Category 1	\$50,836,128
Priority Category 2	\$44,466,690
Priority Category 3	<u>\$946,736</u>
Total Estimated Cost	\$96,249,554

Additionally, the cost for assessment services for FY 2014 is projected as \$19,700,000. Total revenue needed for FY 2014 is \$115,949,554.

The projected budget authority for FY 2014 for IPE and assessment services is estimated to be \$114,952,016. This amount does not include the authority to expend prior year carry forward funds that will also be available.

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

VISION

To become the first place people with disabilities turn when seeking employment and a top resource for employers in need of qualified employees.

MISSION

To help people with disabilities find and maintain employment, and enhance their independence.

Federal Performance Outcomes

Indicator 1.1: Change in Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: Increase over previous year)

Previous Year (2011): +1,576 Actual Performance (2012): +562

Indicator 1.2: Percent of Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: 55.8% or greater)

Previous Year (2011): 47.90% Actual Performance (2012): 45.78%

Indicator 1.3: Competitive Employment Outcome (Primary) (RSA Target: 72.6% or greater)

Previous Year (2011): 99.80% Actual Performance (2012): 99.69%

Indicator 1.4: Significance of Disability (Primary) (RSA Target: 62.4% or greater)

Previous Year (2011): 97.90% Actual Performance (2012): 98.48%

Indicator 1.5: Earnings Ratio (Primary) (RSA Target: 52% or greater).

Previous Year (2011): 52.30% Actual Performance (2012): 52.10%

Indicator 1.6: Self-Support. (RSA Target: 53% or greater)

Previous Year (2011): 50.10% Actual Performance (2012): 51.46%

Indicator 2.1: Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (RSA Target: 80% or greater)

Previous Year (2011): 86.10% Actual Performance (2012): 94.49%

Three Year Goals and Priorities (FFY 2013-2015)

VR, in collaboration with the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC), completed its three year comprehensive statewide needs assessment. Information obtained from the needs assessment, management reports, and feedback from VR staff and customers, was used during a Senior Leadership Team strategic planning retreat to evaluate the division's current goals, objectives, and projects.

Prior to the retreat, the Senior Leadership Team completed a thorough review of the strategic plan, with 2 areas of focus: 1) determine which strategic projects are truly

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strategic in nature, and which are routine business process; and 2) streamline the updated strategic plan in order to allow VR to focus on priorities that will have a direct impact on achieving the vision.

FRC members representing all standing committees then formed a State Plan Task Force to study the draft 2014 State Plan. Listed below are the goals, objectives, strategies resulting from the Senior Leadership Team's planning process and FRC's study of the draft 2014 State Plan.

Goal 1: Improve Customer Success and Satisfaction

Strategic Objective 1.1: Improve the assessment of customer satisfaction.

Strategies:

- 1.1.1. Procure a vendor for conducting customer satisfaction surveys.
- 1.1.2. Design and implement an integrated approach for analyzing factors contributing to unsuccessful case closures, customer satisfaction, customer dissatisfaction, and program effectiveness.

Strategic Objective 1.2: Improve vendor and contracted services processes.

Strategies:

- 1.2.1. Implement background screening program.
- 1.2.2. Review and revise vendor management process.
- 1.2.3. Design and implement contract monitoring and fraud detection processes.
- 1.2.4. Conduct vendor outreach to increase available services for customers.
- 1.2.5. Expand vendor pool for employment and supported employment services.

Goal 2: Improve Employee Development and Workplace Environment

Strategic Objective 2.1: Improve the System for Developing Vocational Rehabilitation Employees.

Strategies:

- 2.1.1. Institute a process for on-boarding, mentoring, training, career pathing, and leadership development for all VR employees, including the implementation of a Learning Management System.
- 2.1.2. Improve employee satisfaction by creating advancement opportunities and succession planning.

Strategic Objective 2.2: Provide a safe, accessible, and adequately equipped work environment.

Strategies:

- 2.2.1. Develop a process to report defective/unsafe working conditions, and provide safety and facilities management training to area staff.

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- 2.2.2. Improve the accessibility of the Division's facilities, based on the results of a comprehensive, consumer-driven evaluation.
- 2.2.3. Improve the accessibility of the Division's technology, based on the results of a comprehensive, consumer-driven evaluation.
- 2.2.4. Improve the accessibility of the Division's programs based on the results of a comprehensive, consumer-driven evaluation.
- 2.2.5. Improve the accessibility of the Division's personnel practices, based on the results of a comprehensive, consumer-driven evaluation.
- 2.2.6. Improve the accessibility of the Division's communications, based on the results of a comprehensive, consumer-driven evaluation.
- 2.2.7. Query all offices regarding the adequacy of their furniture and equipment; remedy deficiencies, where needed.

Goal 3: Improve Vocational Rehabilitation Support Infrastructure

Strategic Objective 3.1: Improve Information Technology Applications.

Strategies:

- 3.1.1. Implement CILs monitoring application system.
- 3.1.2. Redefine VR business processes in RIMS to reflect changes made to RSA -2 and RSA-911 report changes.
- 3.1.3. Use SharePoint to improve document management.
- 3.1.4. Complete modules of RIMS to better align the tools with business processes.

Strategic Objective 3.2: Improve Vocational Rehabilitation Business Intelligence.

Strategies:

- 3.2.1. Centralize data analysis and reporting.
- 3.2.2. Integrate management reports for use by all management teams and communicate to all employees.

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Attachment 4.11 (c) (3): Order of Selection

Justification for the Order of Selection

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) determined that sufficient resources were not available to provide rehabilitation services to all individuals with disabilities that apply. Consequently, VR established an Order of Selection within the state to ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services, those with significant disabilities second and all other eligible individuals selected last. The determination to invoke an Order of Selection was based on use of funds in the preceding years, projected funding, projected number and types of referrals, number of eligible individuals, and counselor case loads.

On August 4, 2008, the Order of Selection was implemented closing all categories. On February 15, 2010, VR determined that sufficient fiscal and human resources were available to serve all Category 1 individuals and opened Category 1. Category 2 was opened on August 2, 2010. Category 3 remains closed at this time. The Order of Selection remains in effect statewide and does not select one disabling condition over another. The Order is not established based on age, sex, marital status, religion, race, color, national origin or political affiliation, and is not based on the vocational goal of the individual with a disability. Elements that relate to the significance of disability are the only factors used in the Order of Selection.

As of May 1, 2013, 1,282 individuals with disabilities in Category 3 remained on the waiting list. It is anticipated that persons with most significant disabilities (Category 1) and persons with significant disabilities (Category 2) will not move to the waiting list in FFY 2014, and these categories will remain open. It is not projected that Category 3 will open. The wait period for “other eligible persons with disabilities” is indeterminate. However, as of May 1, 2013, VR had released 300 individuals from the waiting list and projects that an additional 100 individuals will be released bi-monthly for services for the remainder of FFY 2013 and during the 2014 plan period.

Outcome and Service Goals, and Time Frames for FFY 2014

CATEGORIES	EXISTING AND NEW IPE TO BE SERVED	AVERAGE CASE COST for 12 MONTHS	ANNUAL COST for PURCHASED CLIENT SERVICES	PROJECTED 26s	PROJECTED 28s	TIME/ MONTHS
Priority 1	35,952	\$1,414	\$50,836,128	4,400	4,000	23.9
Priority 2	24,690	\$1,801	\$44,466,690	2,200	1,800	17.4
Priority 3	856	\$1,106	\$946,736	200	100	58.4

Service Costs for FFY 2014

Cost for assessment services for FY 2014 is projected as \$19,700,000. Total revenue needed for FY 2014 is \$115,949,554. The projected budget authority for FY 2014 for IPE

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and assessment services is estimated to be \$114,952,016. This amount does not include the authority to expend prior year carry forward funds that will also be available.

Order of Selection Policies

Individuals seeking Supported Employment services are assessed as having a most significant disability. Additionally, individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance benefits as a result of being determined to be disabled or blind are assessed as having at least a significant disability and are evaluated to determine whether they meet the criteria for individuals with most significant disabilities.

After an individual is found eligible for VR services, an Order of Selection determination is completed. Additional evaluations or assessments to make this determination may be needed. The VR counselor and individual jointly determine the individual's Order of Selection priority category by evaluating his or her functional limitations, anticipated services needed, and the duration of the services.

This policy does not affect an individual who began to receive services under an approved individualized plan for employment prior to the implementation date of Order of Selection, or those individuals who are in need of post-employment services.

VR officially notifies all individuals of their individual Order of Selection determination. Individuals not immediately activated for development of an employment plan are offered referral services and the option to be placed on a waiting list until employment plan development services can be initiated. Individuals on the waiting list are contacted annually to determine if additional information is available. As resources become available, those in Category 3 (other eligible individuals) will be activated.

Order of Selection Priority Description

INDIVIDUALS WITH MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES (Priority 1)

An eligible individual with a disability which:

1. Seriously limits three or more functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome;
2. Requires three or more primary services;
3. Requires services which must be provided over an extended period of time (at least 12 months); and
4. Requires services which are not likely to be corrected through surgical intervention and/or other treatment modes.

INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES (Priority 2)

An eligible individual with a disability which:

1. Seriously limits one or two functional capacities, in terms of an employment outcome;
2. Requires two or more primary services;

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3. Requires services which must be provided over an extended period of time (at least six months); OR
4. The individual is a recipient of Social Security Disability Benefits (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as a result of disability or blindness.

OTHER ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS (Priority 3)

An eligible individual with a disability which:

1. Limits one or more major life's activities; and/or
2. Services are expected to last less than six months.

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

Goal 1: Increase the number of individuals with most significant disabilities who receive Supported Employment services.

Plans

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program will continue to provide supported employment (SE) services on a statewide basis through Title VI, Part B funds and Title I funds. Statewide allocation of funds allows for equal delivery of services throughout Florida. Individuals may receive SE services using a combination of Title I and/or Title VI, Part B funds, and revenues generated from Social Security reimbursements, community rehabilitation partners, and other program revenues.
- Fully expend Title VI-B funds for purchase of Supported Employment services after reserving no more than five percent for program administration.
- Provide a variety of training and awareness programs designed to increase the awareness of Supported Employment as a vocational service for individuals with most significant disabilities.
- Participate with the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council in the development of a series of videos promoting employment options including supported employment and supported self-employment for students transitioning into employment.
- Review pilot and innovative employment practices and assess the feasibility of replicating programs with successful strategies.

Goal 2: Use Title VI-B funds to achieve the maximum number of quality employment outcomes for individuals with most significant disabilities.

Plans

- Use Title I funds, supplemented with Title VI-B funds, to provide Supported Employment services as specified in the Individualized Plan for Employment.
- Purchase Supported Employment services based upon the established performance benchmarks. The contract for supported employment focuses on performance and reinforces the focus on successful outcomes for individuals served.

Goal 3: Increase Supported Employment training opportunities for VR Counselors, Community Rehabilitation service staff, families, and individuals.

Plans

- Increase Supported Employment training opportunities for VR counselors, providers, families, and individuals.

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- Participate in the development of a consortium of providers designed to identify, share and promote innovative employment practices.
- Promote awareness of social security benefits planning as a way to fund extended services.
- Continue to provide joint training opportunities for employees from VR and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD).
- Provide funding to support collaboration between VR and other community resources through networking and leadership activities.
- Continue to be an advisory member on a wide variety of grants from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council that provide training and collaborative activities for providers, counselors, and other agency employees. This is resulting in an increase of the awareness of employment outcomes being available for all interested youth and adults; in particular, those with developmental disabilities and other underserved populations.

Goal 4: Leverage resources for extended ongoing support services.

Plans

- Continue to work with APD to make sure that referred customers know about extended services resources they can get through Medicaid Waiver Funding and/or general revenue funding.
- Continue to work with a network of providers to provide technical assistance and support of innovative projects that promote employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- Provide training on the availability of funding ongoing support through Ticket to Work-Employment Network partnerships, natural supports, and Social Security Work Incentives as possible resources for ongoing supports.
- Encourage using employer and natural supports as a possible resource for ongoing supports.
- Communicate with businesses and employers to educate them about the availability of on-the-job supports for individuals in supported employment. VR will continue efforts to strengthen community partnerships to increase clients' access to appropriate employment services. The VR outreach program for employers offers training and support services on a variety of employer-related topics.
- VR and APD are conducting a series of trainings for employees of both organizations. Identification of all possible sources of extended services is one of the primary objectives of that training.

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Attachment 4.11 (d): State Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

Council Support

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) continues to provide support for the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) and Florida Independent Living Council (FILC). Funds are allocated for the operations of FRC to achieve the goals and objectives in their strategic plan. FRC participates as an active strategic partner with VR in carrying out the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act. VR and FILC operate under a three-year Memorandum of Agreement. The agreement aligns with the three-year state plan for Independent Living.

Use of Innovation and Expansion Funds

VR currently has two innovation and expansion projects. The two contracts include:

1. **Abilities Inc. of Florida** - Help transitioning youth and their families get counseling and vocational assistance as well as medical, social and behavioral health services, as needed.

2. **University of South Florida, Center for Rehabilitation Engineering and Technology**- Use virtual reality, simulators, robotics, and feedback interfaces to allow the vocational rehabilitation population to try various jobs, tasks, virtual environments, and assistive technologies prior to entering the actual employment setting.

It is anticipated that results gained through the continued Innovation and Expansion contracts will contribute to greater employment opportunities for VR customers. In addition to the innovation and expansion projects, VR's SFY 2013-14 Strategic Plan includes a number of strategies that are anticipated to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities:

1. Strategy 1.1.1. Procure a vendor for conducting customer satisfaction surveys.
2. Strategy 1.1.2. Design and implement an integrated approach for analyzing factors contributing to unsuccessful case closures, customer satisfaction, customer dissatisfaction, and program effectiveness.
3. Strategy 1.2.1. Implement background screening program.
4. Strategy 1.2.2. Review and revise vendor management process.
5. Strategy 1.2.3. Design and implement contract monitoring and fraud detection processes.
6. Strategy 1.2.4. Conduct vendor outreach to increase available services for customers.

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7. Strategy 1.2.5. Expand vendor pool for employment and supported employment services.
8. Strategy 2.1.1. Institute a process for on-boarding, mentoring, training, career pathing, and leadership development for all VR employees, including the implementation of a Learning Management System.
9. Strategy 2.2.3. Improve the accessibility of the division's technology, based on the results of a comprehensive, consumer-driven evaluation.
10. Strategy 2.2.2. Improve the accessibility of the division's facilities, based on the results of a comprehensive, consumer-driven evaluation.
11. Strategy 2.2.4. Improve the accessibility of the division's programs based on the results of a comprehensive, consumer-driven evaluation.
12. Strategy 2.2.6. Improve the accessibility of the division's communications, based on the results of a comprehensive, consumer-driven evaluation.

Rehabilitation Technology

Rehabilitation Technology is provided through a contractual agreement with the Center for Engineering and Technology Program at the University of South Florida. The program provides rehabilitation technology assessment and evaluation services for VR's customers across all stages of the VR process. Rehabilitation technology includes a range of services and devices which can supplement and enhance individual functions. It includes services that can impact the work environment through changes like job redesign or worksite modifications.

VR sponsors the Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology Project that is directed by the Assistive Technology Advisory Council in accordance with Section 413.407, Florida Statutes. The project provides for the coordination and delivery of appropriate, cost-effective, state-of-the-art assistive technology services and devices on a statewide basis. The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Inc. (FAAST), is a not-for-profit corporation for which the Assistive Technology Advisory Council acts as the board of directors, manages the project, and provides administrative and technical support to the council.

FAAST is responsible for administering a low interest loan authority that provides funding to individuals with disabilities who may be unable to qualify for traditional loans and bank financing to purchase assistive technology devices.

Assistive technology includes both devices and services. A device is any item or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a person with a disability. Many high-tech and low-tech devices are available to help people with disabilities in daily living tasks, communication, education, work, and recreation.

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Outreach to Individuals with Disabilities who are Minorities and/or who have been Unserved or Underserved

VR continues to assess its services to individuals with the most significant disabilities and individuals who may be unserved or underserved, as well as those with the most significant disabilities who may be from minority populations. Some of VR's related strategies and outreach activities include the following:

1. Strategy 1.1.1. Procure a vendor for conducting customer satisfaction surveys.
2. Strategy 1.1.2. Design and implement an integrated approach for analyzing factors contributing to unsuccessful case closures, customer satisfaction, customer dissatisfaction, and program effectiveness.
3. Strategy 1.2.1. Implement background screening program.
4. Strategy 1.2.2. Review and revise vendor management process.
5. Strategy 1.2.3. Design and implement contract monitoring and fraud detection processes.
6. Strategy 1.2.4. Conduct vendor outreach to increase available services for customers.
7. Strategy 1.2.5. Expand vendor pool for employment and supported employment services.
8. Strategy 2.1.1. Institute a process for on-boarding, mentoring, training, career pathing, and leadership development for all VR employees, including the implementation of a Learning Management System.
9. Continue to explore opportunities to partner with community/faith-based organizations. Develop contact lists of faith-based and other diverse programs as resources for partnership opportunities.
10. Continue to identify outreach activities conducted by the local VR areas for under-represented populations. Conduct outreach in local communities to promote VR as an agency, and assist individuals with disabilities who are minorities or who may be unserved or underserved to return or remain in the workplace. Continue to review and implement local area outreach activities.
11. Continue to analyze what racial/ethnic groups are under-represented in VR caseloads.
12. Continue to analyze disability types in VR caseloads statewide and compare them to the state average to determine groups that may be underserved.
13. Work with Helen Keller Foundation to conduct statewide outreach activities, which include outreach to potential customers who are deaf-blind. Continue to provide disability awareness education to community service agencies and employers.

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14. Continue to conduct outreach to migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families through contracts with community-based organizations and other partners.
15. Continue to implement activities outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe.
16. Continue to develop partnerships with employers that result in employment opportunities for all eligible individuals with disabilities.

Improving Community Rehabilitation Programs

VR assesses its business processes and organizational capacity on an ongoing basis to make consistent improvements in the infrastructure. Results of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment do not indicate a need to establish or develop community rehabilitation programs. Strategies to improve business relationships with community rehabilitation programs include:

1. Strategy 1.2.1. Implement background screening program.
2. Strategy 1.2.2. Review and revise vendor management process.
3. Strategy 1.2.3. Design and implement contract monitoring and fraud detection processes.
4. Strategy 1.2.4. Conduct vendor outreach to increase available services for customers.
5. Strategy 1.2.5. Expand vendor pool for employment and supported employment services.
6. Strategy 3.1.1. Implement CILs monitoring application system.

Strategies to Improve the Performance Related to Goals, Priorities, and Performance Indicators

Federal Performance Outcomes

Indicator 1.1: Change in Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: Increase over previous year)

Previous Year (2011): +1,576 Actual Performance (2012): +562

Indicator 1.2: Percent of Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: 55.8% or greater)

Previous Year: (2011): 47.90% Actual Performance (2012): 45.78%

Indicator 1.3: Competitive Employment Outcome (Primary) (RSA Target: 72.6% or greater)

Previous Year (2011): 99.80% Actual Performance (2012): 99.69%

Indicator 1.4: Significance of Disability (Primary) (RSA Target: 62.4% or greater)

Previous Year (2011): 97.90% Actual Performance (2012): 98.48%

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Indicator 1.5: Earnings Ratio (Primary) (RSA Target: 52% or greater).
Previous Year (2011): 52.30% Actual Performance (2012): 52.10%

Indicator 1.6: Self-Support. (RSA Target: 53% or greater)
Previous Year (2011): 50.10% Actual Performance (2012): 51.46%

Indicator 2.1: Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (RSA Target: 80% or greater)
Previous Year (2011): 86.10% Actual Performance (2012): 94.49%

Program performance is influenced by many factors, including the overall economic climate in the state. Florida's unemployment rate continues to decline. As of March 2013, Florida's unemployment rate was reported as 7.5 percent. It decreased 1.9 percentage points below the rate for the period ending December 31, 2011. According to Florida's Office of Economic and Demographic Research, the current rate of 7.5 percent equates to approximately 706,000 individuals not working. Information also shows that Florida's unemployment rate is now slightly lower than the national average of 7.6 percent. As of March 2013, only 1 Florida county, Hendry County, continued to have an unemployment rate in double digits (10.0 percent).

Recognizing these issues, VR will continue to collaborate with partners at the state and local levels to maximize employment services for people with disabilities. Florida VR anticipates that all strategic projects within its Strategic Plan will have a positive impact on program performance. Additional activities include the following:

1. VR will continue to contract for Innovation and Expansion services that use innovative approaches to improve the effectiveness of VR services that result in successful employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities. These services will be provided to VR's customers in order to increase employment opportunities; improve the effectiveness of VR services; and/or train individuals with the most significant disabilities to promote self-sufficiency and overcome barriers to employment.
2. Work with the Helen Keller Foundation to conduct statewide outreach activities, which include outreach to potential customers who are deaf-blind.

Strategies for the Statewide Workforce Investment System to Assist Individuals with Disabilities

VR continues to be geographically aligned with the workforce regions and complies with requirements to collaborate with regional workforce boards. The following are strategies used for collaborating with the statewide workforce investment system to assist individuals with disabilities:

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1. Continue implementation of the three-party Memorandum of Agreement between VR, the Agency for Workforce Innovation, and the Workforce Investment Board.
2. Continue implementation of the Memoranda of Understandings with the 24 Regional Workforce Boards.
3. Collaborate with and offer training to One-Stop Centers and Employment Networks to provide services.
4. Continue area directors' participation on the local Workforce Investment Boards.
5. Continue to promote VR's presence in the One-Stop Centers through co-location of VR's units in One-Stop Centers; staff being out-stationed; and/or through regular visits by VR staff to One-Stop Centers.

Equitable Access

To ensure equal access for individuals with disabilities, VR will conduct activities and strategies listed below.

1. Continue to use interpreters and translators and VR's online resources, as well as the websites of other partners and stakeholders (where permitted), to reach underserved populations and increase communication with customers.
2. Offer reasonable accommodations to give equal access to services, and make sure that materials and other program information are available in English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole for various agencies, employers, churches, community leaders, health clinics, and other settings.
3. Continue to assign counselors and consultants to serve specialized populations, such as the deaf and hard-of-hearing, transition students, mental health customers, and brain and spinal cord injury customers. These employees are trained to effectively serve these specialized groups, as well as perform as community liaisons for them. See Attachment 4.10.
4. Strategy 2.2.3. Improve the accessibility of the division's technology, based on the results of a comprehensive, consumer-driven evaluation.
5. Strategy 2.2.2. Improve the accessibility of the division's facilities, based on the results of a comprehensive, consumer-driven evaluation.
6. Strategy 2.2.4. Improve the accessibility of the division's programs based on the results of a comprehensive, consumer-driven evaluation.
7. Strategy 2.2.6. Improve the accessibility of the division's communications, based on the results of a comprehensive, consumer-driven evaluation.

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Attachment 4.11 (e) (2): Evaluation and Report of Progress

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), in collaboration with the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC), established five strategic goals for FFY 2011-2012. These goals and priorities were developed based on an analysis of VR's performance on the federal and state level standards and indicators, the preliminary result of the statewide needs assessment, and input from customers, providers, and other stakeholders.

The following section provides VR's evaluation and report of progress in achieving the goals. Also, this attachment reports review information about FRC's customer satisfaction survey research and other activities.

Review of VR Program Goals for Federal Fiscal Year 2011-2012

Goal 1: Strengthen Leadership and Collaboration

Objective 1.1: Assume a leadership role to foster cooperation and collaboration at the federal, state, and local levels for partners involved in the employment and independence of individuals with disabilities.

Indicators and Targets:

1. Percent of Division's responsibilities met as outlined in MOU.
Target: Baseline to be collected in FY 2012-13.
2. Percent of Memoranda of Agreements and Memoranda of Understandings in compliance.
Target: Baseline to be collected in FY 2012-13.
3. Number of local level provider and employer network group meetings.
Target: Baseline to be collected in FY 2012-13.

Objective 1.2: Increase compliance with requirements and promote best practices by the Centers for Independent Living.

Indicator and Target:

1. Cumulative percent of Centers for Independent Living in full compliance with evaluation standards met.
Target: Baseline to be collected in FY 2012-13.
Actual: An evaluation application was developed and implementation is in process. Internet connectivity has been a barrier to implementation of the evaluation tool, as it is not accessible in all field locations for which it was designed to be used. The application is anticipated to be implemented during FFY 2013.

Actual Performance for Goal 1:

During review of the current plan, all strategies included under Goal 1 were determined to be operational activities that VR conducts, and will continue to conduct, as routine business process. Therefore, these strategies were dropped.

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GOAL 2: Improve Service Delivery through Strengthened Workplace Environment and Improved Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Staff

Objective 2.1: Assess overall employee satisfaction.

Indicator and Target:

1. Overall Employee Satisfaction.

Target: 93%

Actual: Employee climate was not assessed during this planning cycle, but results from the 2013 survey will be included in the FY 2015 state plan.

Objective 2.2: Improve employee satisfaction.

Indicator and Target:

1. Percent of employees satisfied with targeted topic areas (see key strategies for this objective).

Target: Baseline to be collected in FY 2012-13.

Actual: Employee climate was not assessed during this planning cycle, but results from the 2013 survey will be included in the FY 2015 state plan.

Objective 2.3: Improve advancement opportunities for division employees.

Indicator and Target:

1. Internal Promotion Rate

Target: Baseline to be collected in FY 2012-13.

Actual: Strategies under this objective were combined with new strategies that include the design of mentoring and career pathing.

Objective 2.4: Improve service delivery by enhancing employee skills.

Indicator and Target:

1. Percentage of all VR employees successfully completing identified training (defined as demonstration of knowledge and demonstration of behavior).

Target: Baseline to be collected in FY 2011-12.

Actual: Strategies under this objective were revised in the upcoming strategic plan to address all aspects of employee development.

Objective 2.5: Provide professional comfortable office environments that are accessible, safe, and secure.

Indicator and Target:

1. Employee satisfaction with office environment (accessible, comfortable, safe).

Target: 90 percent

Actual: Employee climate was not assessed during this planning cycle, but results from the 2013 survey will be included in the FY 2015 state plan.

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Indicator and Target:

1. Percentage of individuals served that are self-supporting at closure compared to at application (RSA Indicator 1.6).

Target: 53%

Actual: 51.46%

GOAL 4: Improve VR Support Processes and Systems

Objective 4.1: Improve vendor processes.

Indicators and Targets:

1. Percent of vendors completing the registration process within ten days.

Target: 100%

Actual: 88.3%

2. Average time for vendor registration.

Target: 48 hours (2 days)

Actual: 8.8 days

Objective 4.2: Improve contract and invoice payment processes.

Indicator and Target:

1. Percent of invoices paid on time.

Target: Baseline to be collected in FY 2012-13

Actual: Strategies under this objective were revised in the upcoming strategic plan to address VR's business intelligence, information management, and support infrastructure needs.

Objective 4.3: Update data systems and technology to better support customers and staff.

Indicator and Target:

1. Percentage of project milestones completed on time.

Target: Baseline to be collected in FY 2012-13.

Actual: Strategies under this objective were revised in the upcoming strategic plan to address VR's business intelligence, information management, and support infrastructure needs.

GOAL 5: Improve the System for Evaluating Quality

Objective 5.1: Design an integrated management system for business processes, reporting performance, and improving performance.

Indicators and Targets:

1. Percent of indicators trending in the right direction.

Target: Baseline to be collected in FY 2012-13

2. Percent of strategic projects on schedule.

Target: Baseline to be collected in FY 2012-13

Actual: Strategies under this objective were revised in the upcoming strategic plan to address VR's business intelligence, information management, and support infrastructure needs.

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Explanation about Performance:

Strategies that contributed to achievement of goals and priorities

Goal 1, related to strengthening leadership and collaboration, included routine activities such as regular meetings with other agency partners (e.g., Agency for Persons with Disabilities), stakeholder groups (e.g., Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, Florida Rehabilitation Council, Florida Independent Living Council), and workforce boards. Additional leadership and collaboration activities include VR participation on the Governor's Commission for Employment for Persons with Disabilities, partnership councils, and national groups such as the Rehabilitation Program Evaluation Network, Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Centers, Institute for Rehabilitation Issues (IRI), the VR Program Evaluation Summit, and CSAVR. Collaboration with other agencies and national and community partners allows Florida VR to share and receive good practices. For example, Florida VR participated in the development of a return on investment study sponsored by the IRI in which experts from around the country developed a best practice approach for assessing VR return on investment and economic impact.

Goal 2, related to workplace environment and strengthening recruitment and retention of staff, included continued activities to procure a division-wide learning management system, as well as the development of a standardized approach for training vocational rehabilitation technicians. In addition, a number of employee safety practices were adopted and explained to employees across the state.

Goal 3, related to customer success and satisfaction, included a number of activities related to increasing employment outcomes for specific disability groups. Examples of activities include the trial of services using a Discovery approach, expanding self-employment efforts, and specialized training for VR employees working with transition-age students. Goal 3 also addressed measures and activities to complete VR's Performance Improvement Plan, which was accepted by the Rehabilitation Services Administration in FFY 2012.

Goal 4, related to VR support processes and systems, included the development of an approach to identify vendors performing outside of the norm, enhancements to the Rehabilitation Electronic Billing Application (REBA), and continued conversion of the Rehabilitation Information Management System (RIMS) to a ".net" platform, which included multiple training activities for VR employees.

Goal 5, related to improving the system for evaluating quality, included the development of the Bureau of Planning and Performance, which created a new Strategic Project Management Office (SPMO). The SPMO is charged with managing the strategic planning process and tracking key VR strategic projects. The bureau also created additional business intelligence capacity to collect key data and report it to VR employees on strategic or as-needed bases. These new developments intended to achieve Goal 5 are still in the design and implementation phases.

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Barriers that impeded achievement of goals and priorities

As noted above, VR developed a new Bureau of Planning and Performance. Previous attempts to collect and integrate data from various sources proved to be difficult, which led to the development of the SPMO and enhanced business intelligence capacity (which is still underway).

In this strategic planning cycle, VR senior leaders participated in several planning meetings. It was determined that all key projects were being addressed in some way, but there were too many (53) for VR to be able to maintain a clear focus on what was important. Using a deliberative consensus development process, VR senior leaders agreed that many projects and activities listed in the plan from last year were completed, or were essentially routine business processes. Senior leaders considered employee feedback from the climate survey, feedback from customers, general process performance, and the requirements for the collection and reporting of information to the Federal Rehabilitation Services Administration in order to develop revised goals, objectives, and strategic projects for the current year.

Senior leaders agreed that the plan will be regularly reviewed and updated on a quarterly basis. Future plans include the intention to provide all the support needed for strategic project teams to ensure their success. Arrangements are in place so that anyone can provide feedback on the plan, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, using a dedicated email address on the Florida VR website, www.rehabworks.org/plans.shtml. The email address is vrplan@vr.fldoe.org.

Evaluation of Supported Employment Program

This is an update of VR's progress in providing supported employment services. For specific information about the goals and strategies, see Attachments 4.11 (c) (4) and 6.3.

Review of Attachment 4.11 (c) (4)

Goal 1: Increase service capacity for individuals with the most significant disabilities

Actual Performance:

1. VR allocated VI-B funds among its six areas on the same basis as Title I funds to ensure individuals with most significant disabilities have equal access statewide to VR services.
2. Training for new counselors includes an increased focus on innovative ways to increase employment opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities.
3. Training has been developed for VR and APD counselors so they will know how to develop follow along services for joint customers.

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Goal 2: Use Title VI-B funds to achieve the maximum number of quality employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities

Actual Performance:

VR provided supported employment services, when appropriate, to individuals with most significant disabilities, including those with developmental disabilities, who may benefit from supported employment services. Data below represent VR's performance in serving consumers under Title VI-B.

Average number of active cases:

Previous Year (2011): 5,070 Actual Performance (2012): 5,331

Number of Individualized Plans for Employment:

Previous Year (2011): 1,791 Actual Performance (2012): 1,602

Number of Rehabilitations:

Previous Year (2011): 345 Actual Performance (2012): 516

VR's desire to provide supported employment services was complicated by the lack of sufficient partner resources for commitment of long-term supports. As budgets are reduced at state and local levels, creative resource sharing and options are being explored with stakeholders.

In response to these challenges, VR increased its collaboration with the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and other stakeholders to help develop pilot projects designed to increase employment opportunities to those individuals with most significant disabilities.

Goal 3: Use the five percent permitted for administration to fund development and delivery of training and technical assistance

Actual Performance:

1. VR collaborated with the Department of Children and Families and APD at all organizational levels.
2. The supported employment administrator continues to provide training on service delivery for individuals with the most significant disabilities to new counselors, as well as follow-up trainings and technical assistance to seasoned counselors and supervisors at conferences, meetings, workshops, and upon request.
3. VR Administrators provided training to families and members in the community as requested. These sessions are designed to provide information and a vision that supported employment services are designed for individuals with the most significant disabilities. It provides families and customers with the information they need to become successfully employed. The sessions were provided to the

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following groups and organizations listed below.

- a. Florida Developmental Disability Council
 - b. Family Care Council
 - c. Waiver Support Coordinators
 - d. Florida Rehabilitation Council
 - e. Florida Project Search
 - f. Certified Business and Technical Assistance Consultant Area Training
 - g. Transition Committees
 - h. Individualized Trainings
 - i. Family Disability Network
 - j. Florida Department of Education Staff
 - k. Family Café
 - l. Visions
 - m. AmeriCorps
 - n. Florida ARC
4. VR administrators provide technical assistance and consultations on individual cases as requested by supervisors, family members, VR staff, and individual customers.
5. A number of strategies were used to support collaboration between VR and other community resources through networking and leadership activities listed below.
- a. Representation on the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and Employment Task Force. This includes assisting in the development of pilot projects on a wide array of topics, but all topics that provide support to VR's mission of assisting individuals to gain employment outcomes.
 - b. Representation on the Interagency Services Committee.
 - c. Representation on the National Disability Institute's Asset Development Advisory Committee.
 - d. Presentations on supported employment at conferences around the state; audiences including professionals, families, and students regarding employment options.
 - e. Participation in the development of a transition website that offers information for customers.

GOAL 4: Leverage resources for extended ongoing support services

Actual Performance:

1. VR employees continue to serve as resource members on Business Leadership Networks to educate businesses and employers about on-the-job supports for individuals in supported employment.
2. VR and APD employees continue to provide training for VR counselors, waiver support coordinators, and for APD field staff on best practices in supported employment and the roles and responsibilities of all partners.

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3. VR employees participate on a periodic basis in APD hosted conference calls, as well as quarterly meetings designed to make the supported employment service delivery system for mutual clients an effective and efficient one.
4. The supported employment administrator provides training to field staff on the multiple options available for extended services.
5. VR has completed a pilot project in Area 3, using Discovery Services to help individuals with most significant disabilities become employed. This strategy will be made available to other areas in a roll out process.
6. A VR senior consultant is exploring possible strategies and options for providing services to individuals with mental health disorders. Additional training is being conducted in this area to provide additional options for individuals who may not have been successful in obtaining and maintain employment using current strategies alone.

Explanation of Performance:

The strategies reported above helped VR increase services and employment outcomes for individuals with most significant disabilities.

Review of Attachment 6.3

Actual Performance:

1. VR, in collaboration with the Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, contracts with 19 school districts to help provide community-based work experiences to students with disabilities.
2. The VR administrators presented at the Family Care Council, Family Café, Employment, Business Leadership Network, Florida Developmental Disability Council, and the VISIONS Conference in an effort to increase awareness about using natural supports and emphasized its use as a realistic option for successful job maintenance.
3. The VR administrator partners with APD to provide joint skills-development training on supported employment to counselors and waiver support coordinators, and provides technical assistance, as needed. APD's employment chief and VR's supported employment administrator have developed a training for staff from both agencies that encourages and mandates collaboration in serving and supporting mutual customers. The trainings will be provided throughout the state and follow-up webinars will be available to sustain the training.
4. The VR administrator provides training to Certified Business and Technical Assistance Consultants and VR staff to encourage the use of supported

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self-employment as an employment option for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Explanation of Performance:

The strategies reported above helped VR improve services and employment outcomes for individuals with most significant disabilities.

RSA Standards and Indicators

Indicator 1.1: Change in Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: Increase over previous year)

Previous Year (2011): +1,576 Actual Performance (2012): +562

Indicator 1.2: Percent of Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: 55.8% or greater)

Previous Year (2011): 47.90% Actual Performance (2012): 45.78%

Indicator 1.3: Competitive Employment Outcome (Primary) (RSA Target: 72.6% or greater)

Previous Year (2011): 99.80% Actual Performance (2012): 99.69%

Indicator 1.4: Significance of Disability (Primary) (RSA Target: 62.4% or greater)

Previous Year (2011): 97.90% Actual Performance (2012): 98.48%

Indicator 1.5: Earnings Ratio (Primary) (RSA Target: 52% or greater).

Previous Year (2011): 52.30% Actual Performance (2012): 52.10%

Indicator 1.6: Self-Support. (RSA Target: 53% or greater)

Previous Year (2011): 50.10% Actual Performance (2012): 51.46%

Indicator 2.1: Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (RSA Target: 80% or greater)

Previous Year (2011): 86.10% Actual Performance (2012): 94.49%

Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

In FFY 2011-12, VR, with the agreement of the FRC, continued to use funds designated under this section to support the functions of the FRC and FILC, and to embrace opportunities for improving the efficiency of service delivery.

Actual Performance:

VR continues to support and collaborate with the FRC and FILC as required in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. More than 19,000 independent living plans were developed, and more than 35,000 independent living goals were set through the network of 16 Centers for Independent Living.

In FFY 2010-11, VR completed a competitive procurement and awarded four contracts to providers for Innovation and Expansion projects. The innovative services include

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virtual reality simulators for customers with severe disabilities, vocational services and assistance for transitioning youth with most significant disabilities, and assistance and support for individuals with moderate to severe traumatic brain injury or significant mental illnesses. Of the initial contracts awarded, two will continue into FFY 2013-14. It is anticipated that services made available through the continued Innovation and Expansion contracts will contribute to greater employment opportunities for VR customers.

Explanation about Progress:

The collaborative efforts helped strengthen leadership and improved services, which led to increased employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. It is anticipated that the two continuing Innovation and Expansion projects will contribute positively to VR's rehabilitation rate and provide for more informed customer choice and options.

Florida Rehabilitation Council

The FRC works in strategic partnership with VR to facilitate policy and procedures consistent with federal and state law, and to promote economic independence for persons with disabilities. In FFY 2012-13, FRC members evaluated VR performance and met with VR staff to understand, monitor, and provide feedback regarding the quality and ongoing impact of VR services, policy changes, financial participation and order of selection. FRC members also met with Florida legislators and others to seek feedback, provide education and advocacy regarding VR services and the needs of our customers. Information packets were handed out, including information about cost of services, return on investment, number of individuals successfully employed and average wages. Interested parties were able to see the positive, direct impact and contributions of VR's customers not only in their home congressional districts, but statewide as well.

The Council monitors **customer satisfaction** by contracting with Florida State University to conduct two independent surveys. The surveys measure customer satisfaction on multiple scales at the time individuals begin working on their Individualized Plans for Employment and at closure. The results of the FRC customer satisfaction surveys help Council and VR formulate methods to strengthen and improve service delivery. For FFY 2011-12 the rate of overall satisfaction for both surveys, open and closed case, was approximately 75 percent.

Council actions and some survey item summaries for **closed cases** are as follows:

- Survey Item 1- Accessibility of VR offices:
Rehabilitated = 92% satisfaction vs. Unsuccessful placement = 68% satisfaction
Council and VR action: currently assessing all offices for ease of access.
- Survey Item 2- Treated with courtesy and respect:
Rehabilitated = 97% satisfaction vs. Unsuccessful placement = 82% satisfaction
Council action: 2014 State Plan Council Recommendation #2 Encourage staff training in the areas of facilitation, communication, advocacy and collaboration.
- Survey Item 3- Understand needs and feelings

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Rehabilitated = 88% satisfaction vs. Unsuccessful placement = 61% satisfaction
Council action: 2014 State Plan Council Recommendation #2 Encourage staff training in the areas of facilitation, communication, advocacy and collaboration.

- Survey Item 4- Appropriateness of services received
Rehabilitated = 90% felt appropriate vs. Unsuccessful placement = 61% felt appropriate.
Council action: future area of council focus as evidenced by differences found among rehabilitated closed cases and unsuccessful closed cases; may illuminate future training needs.
- Survey Item 5- Other service needs but have not received
Rehabilitated = 65% no other service needs vs. Unsuccessful placements = 47% no other service needs.
Council action: 2014 State Plan Council Recommendation #2 Encourage staff training in the areas of facilitation, communication, advocacy and collaboration. In addition, given the Codes of Federal Regulation (CFRs) and Florida Statutes, VR is limited somewhat in the scope and type of services options available.
- Survey Item 6- Informed of choices in providers and goals
Rehabilitated = 81% indicated informed vs. Unsuccessful placement = 63% indicated informed.
Council action: 2014 State Plan Council Recommendation #2 Encourage staff training in the areas of facilitation, communication, advocacy and collaboration.
- Survey Item 6b- Able to make choices in providers and goals
Rehabilitated = 93% satisfaction vs. Unsuccessful placement = 77% satisfaction
Council action: 2014 State Plan Council Recommendation #2 Encourage staff training in the areas of facilitation, communication, advocacy and collaboration.
- Survey Item 7- Services provided promptly
Rehabilitated = 72% considered prompt vs. Unsuccessful placement = 47% considered prompt.
Council action: 2014 State Plan Council Recommendation #2 Encourage improved communication by staff and encourage self-development of IPE.
- Survey Item 8- Services made life better
Rehabilitated = 89% indicated services made life better vs. Unsuccessful placement = 47% indicated services made life better.
Council action: This area of customer response will be watched closely during the FFYs 2013-15 to see if the staff training that Council has recommended will improve customer outcomes.
- Survey Item 9- Overall satisfaction with services received from VR
Rehabilitated = 87% satisfied vs. Unsuccessful placement = 51% satisfied.
Council action: This is an area that FRC will be watching closely during the FFY 2013-14, given the staff development areas highlighted by VR and FRC in the 2014 State Plan.

Qualitative data from the Customer Satisfaction Survey is reviewed regularly and compiled on a yearly basis. A few consistent areas of comment are under FRC review.

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The FRC continues to work with VR staff to capture the voice of the customer. In partnership, it is decided that stand-alone state plan public forums will only be conducted when significant changes to the state plan occur. To maintain an avenue for customer and stakeholder input, the FRC holds Public Forums every quarter in various areas of Florida. These forums have been developed to gather comments on any topic, including the state plan throughout the year. All comments and feedback are reviewed and are used by the council to development comments and recommendations to VR.

The FRC held four public forums during FY 2012-13 in Orlando, Boca Raton, Tallahassee and Daytona Beach. Each forum was also made available to anyone statewide via telephone access and Communication Access Real-time Transcription (CART) services online. Approximately 45 individuals attended these forums, not including FRC and VR representatives. The public forum individuals in attendance have included: FRC Council Members and staff, VR staff, a VR Ombudsman, customers, stakeholders, parents, providers, and vendors.

Representatives in attendance from other agencies included the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Florida Independent Living Commission, Centers for Independent Living, the Department of Children and Families, the Disability Rights of Florida program (authorized Client Assistance Program [CAP] representative), the state Mental Health Planning Council, Florida Independent Living Center, Family Network on Disabilities, Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Business Leadership Network area representatives, Disability Solutions (service dog trainers), Project 10, the Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, and State of Florida Legislative Delegates and Representatives.

Public Forum comment areas and examples include:

On the Job (OJT) Training – A desire for OJT to be expanded across the state; compliments of the OJT process and service delivery

Business Leadership Networking – A desire to increase business outreach and involvement with VR; new businesses offering services that may be beneficial to people living with disabilities

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development – Encouragement to improve diversity training for VR staff; the need for VR staff to meet customer limitations presented (i.e., the need for sign language interpreters, Spanish speakers, visually impaired assistance); also the need to establish standard procedures and expectations for quality customer service by VR staff and a process for notification when counselors change.

Funding – Concerns about the lack of expansion of some services statewide and the ending of contractual agreements dealing with transition youth customers and providers

Case Management - Counselor concerns, compliments and complaints; information on how to file a complaint; job coach concerns; the need for technology or the VR rejection for rehabilitation technology; and concerns over the length of time it takes to develop small business plans

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Cooperation and Collaboration – A desire to work with FRC or VR; the need to increase awareness of what VR does and the services offered

Specific Service Questions – When presented with specific case questions, the Council will encourage customers to work with the Ombudsman’s office, and the FRC Program Administrator will get back with the speaker to handle case specifics with confidentiality in mind

Outreach – Need to increase communication and partnership with Centers for Independent Living; need to improve notification process about FRC Public Forums; consider alternative hour for conducting public forums

Rehabilitation Electronic Billing Application (REBA) – Concerns about system problems and payment delays

The FRC also helps with the development and conducting of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and looks forward to reviewing the areas of need identified and all efforts of continuous improvement. In strategic partnership the Council encourages further discussion and review of VR’s strategic plan and the agency efforts for continuous improvement.

In closing, the FRC reviewed and voted to approve, with recommendations, the 2014 VR State Plan at its quarterly meeting conducted May 21- 22, 2013, in Daytona Beach, Florida.

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

Quality

VR is committed to providing quality supported employment (SE) services to people with the most significant disabilities. VR supports the individual in making employment choices consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests.

VR counselors help individuals pursue the goals detailed in the individualized plan for employment (IPE) by using supported employment resources to the individual's best advantage. VR actively involves customers and families as appropriate in assessment, planning, and decision making throughout the service delivery process.

VR evaluates the effectiveness of its services and makes improvements to them as needed. A key component of evaluating the services is the individual and employer's satisfaction with the services and supports as well as the successful employment outcome.

Extended services are provided and/or funded by sources other than VR. VR works collaboratively with other state agencies and organizations to ensure that extended ongoing support services identified on the individualized plan for employment are available for as long as the customer needs them. VR counselors monitor Supported Employment cases closely and evaluate the case for employment stability prior to closure.

VR has a statewide coordinator who monitors issues that develop in the field of supported employment and serves as a resource person to staff. The coordinator also serves as advisor to administrative staff in implementing programmatic policies in accordance with federal dictates, develops effective programmatic procedures, recommends training of SE staff, and other typical functions of a coordinating and liaison nature.

Scope

The scope of supported employment services is an intensive array of services that include all services under Title 1, the coordination of extended ongoing support services, and the development of natural supports.

Phase 1 Supported Employment Services are those services needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment.

Supported employment makes possible competitive employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, and because of the severity of their disability, need ongoing support services in order to maintain their job.

These services are for a period not to exceed 18 months and are funded by VR. Under special circumstances, the customer and VR counselor may jointly agree in writing to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE.

Post-employment services may be provided when supports and services are needed

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which exceed the responsibility of the extended ongoing support service provider.

Services are individually designed around the needs and desires of the customer and may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Initial placement and stabilization in the workplace
- Job Coaching
- Assistive Technology
- Specialized Job Training
- Social Skill Training
- Formal and informal work site related expectations (e.g., time and attendance, dress, communication)

VR is expanding a pilot program that adds Discovery as a service option to the array of supported employment services. It offers a more intensive person-centered planning approach for those individuals with the most significant and complex disabilities who may need a more customized approach to employment. This service is anticipated to roll out beyond the pilot in the coming years.

Extent

VR will continue to look to expand supported employment services by educating community members, providers, and relevant stakeholders.

The amount of supported employment services provided is determined by the following: a statewide needs assessment; analysis of historic performance data; number of students exiting schools; and data provided by agency partners (e.g., Department of Children and Families, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, and the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program).

Supported employment services are provided as long as resources are available through collaborative efforts to improve funding for Phase 2 Follow-Along extended supports.

VR will:

- Continue to use cooperative agreements with APD and the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, including maximizing funding for shared clients.
- Implement the Interagency Articulation Agreement between VR and APD, as well as the cooperative agreement with the Department of Children and Families, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse to decrease barriers for individuals working with multiple agencies while seeking employment. VR is actively engaged in reviewing the articulation agreement between VR and APD, and will make appropriate updates to the agreement.
- Continue to implement the cooperative agreements at the local levels with appropriate stakeholders.
- Develop strategies to clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of each agency involved in the cooperative agreements.

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- Maximize the quality of service delivery ensuring an efficient and effective referral process, individual program planning, coordination of intensive vocational services with extended services, information collection and dissemination, confidentiality, and technical assistance.
- Implement an interagency planning process between VR and APD that defines and projects the number of people in need of intensive and extended services each fiscal year and facilitates program and fiscal planning.
- Expand the extent of available services through the School to Work Program's collaboration with local school districts.
- Emphasize the provision of services to all racial/ethnic minorities.
- Seek additional resources for Phase II services through legislative funding requests and/or collaboration with agency partners, including APD, Agency for Healthcare Administration, Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Department of Education, and others.
- Collaborate with community organizations, employers, families, and support groups to develop natural supports for supported employment extended services.
- Partner with Mental Health's Florida Assertive Community Treatment teams to provide supported employment services to individuals with severe and persistent mental illnesses and individuals exiting psychiatric/mental health facilities.
- Participate in the Interagency Services Committee to expand interagency initiatives and increase employment outcomes for persons with developmental disabilities.
- Distribute information and train counselors about social security work incentives. Increase the awareness of using a Plan for Achieving Self-Sufficiency or other work incentives as an option for funding extended services.
- Provide training on using natural supports, including self-pay, family/friends, and employers.
- Provide technical assistance on the use of natural supports to assist customers on the job site.
- Provide opportunities for counselors, providers, and support coordinators to receive training on innovative employment strategies designed to promote employment success for individuals.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES – PHASE II

Transition to Extended Services

Transition occurs a minimum of 90 days after "stabilization." Responsibility for funding ongoing support service transitions at this time from VR to the source of funding for the ongoing support services.

Supported employment outcome closure of a person successfully rehabilitated in a supported employment outcome occurs when the following criteria are met: (a) 90 days following stabilization and 60 days from transition to closure (to assure on-going supports are successful following transition); or (b) a minimum of 150 days of continuous employment following stabilization.

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Extent of Extended Support Services

VR has developed a supported employment (SE) action plan to address the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities and others who may require supported employment services. VR's action plan focuses on improved collaboration, enhanced staff and provider skills, and better use of existing resources.

The service approach for supported employment eligible customers utilizes the nationally accepted "best practices" models of supported employment services. Key to the approach is an emphasis on person-centered planning and facilitation of natural supports. Individualized job development is conducted by SE staff based on job-matching assessment information and client's informed choice. SE clients are assisted with employment planning and placement by selected providers, and job skills training is provided at the job site either by job coaches or through natural supports of existing resources.

VR continues to:

- Emphasize the provision of services to all racial /ethnic minorities
- Seek additional resources for Phase II services in collaboration with VR partners
- Collaborate with community organizations, families, and support groups to develop natural supports as an option for assisting customers on the job site
- Participate in interagency committees to expand initiatives and increase employment outcomes
- Distribute and provide technical assistance to counselors on the use of Social Security Work Incentives to assist with funding Phase II services.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

SEP 19 2013

Pam Stewart
Interim Commissioner of Education
Florida Department of Education
Turlington Building, Suite 1514
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Ms. Stewart:

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) acknowledges your electronic submission of the State Plan for the Title I Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Program and Supplement for the Title VI-B Supported Employment (SE) Services Program in the form of a preprint of affirmative assurances and required attachments on behalf of Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (FDVR) in compliance with Sections 101(a) and 625 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, as amended (the Act).

The State Plan, in the form of a preprint of affirmative assurances and required attachments, was reviewed to ensure conformity with statutory provisions of the Act, implementing regulations and the administrative requirements of RSA. Based on this review, the fiscal year (FY) 2014 State Plan is approved. In addition, FDVR has submitted, and RSA approves, an additional assurance to complete the activities necessary to comply with the federal requirements as stated in the FY 2014 preprint. This additional assurance was submitted under section 1 of the preprint assurances and is signed and dated separately by the individual authorized to sign the State Plan.

In accordance with the approval of the State Plan materials, RSA is making available to Florida its FY 2014 Title I, Part B, and Title VI, Part B, grant awards.

The approved FY 2014 FDVR State Plan will be published by RSA and available to the general public on RSA's website by Tuesday, October 1, 2013. Individuals, who wish to read the State Plan at that time, may visit <http://rsa.ed.gov>, and then select "About Your State."

If you and your staff have questions related to this review or the approval of the FY 2014 State Plan, please contact your state liaison, Christyne Cavataio, at (202) 245-6123 or christyne.cavataio@ed.gov.

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We appreciate your timely submission of this information and your continuing efforts to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve high-quality employment outcomes.

Sincerely,


Janet LaBreck
Commissioner

cc: Aleisa McKinlay
Christyne Cavataio