

2015 FEDERAL STATE PLAN FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Final- Approved

**FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2015
October 1, 2014 - September 30, 2015**

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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2015 STATE PLAN Draft v5.0
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (FLDOE)
DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR)

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Attachment 4.2 (c): Input of the State Rehabilitation Council

Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC, Council) Comments

The State of Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC, Council) and the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) 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 2015 State Plan. Feedback from each area was obtained in collaboration with VR to develop 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
- Director's Reports
- Partnership Reports
- VR Performance Reports
- Council and VR Discussions

Based on the FRCs review of the draft plan recommendations were developed at the May, 2014 quarterly meeting to be included in the 2015 State Plan. The Council recommendations were discussed 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 2015 State Plan with the inclusion of the FRC recommendations.

Council recommendations are presented below:

Recommendation 1: 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 services and remove all individuals from the wait list. Council also encourages working with the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) and legislative stakeholders to plan ahead to meet the needs of employees and funds to fulfill the mission of VR. Efforts to establish accurate budget forecasting are strongly encouraged to avoid a delay in service delivery and limited access.

The Council is concerned with the impact of recent wait list category closures on all customers especially individuals with the most significant disabilities and transition students, which highlights the need to rebuild and strengthen customer confidence in the assets of the VR program. Information and Referral processes need to be clarified and emphasized for customers who are still on the waiting list [per Section 101 (a) (5) (D) of the Act and 34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 361.36 (a) (3) (iv)].

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Agency Response:

VR redesigned a model for projecting budget and service data in November 2013. Preliminary projection data has been, and will continue to be communicated to FRC as developed.

Acknowledging FRC concerns with the VR Information and Referral process, and the added importance of this information while service categories remain closed, VR Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will re-communicate this topic to all field staff.

As noted in Attachment 4.11(b), individuals in Priority Category 1 will start receiving services in June 2014.

Recommendation 2: VR Communication and Collaboration with FRC, customers and stakeholders

Per 34 CFR 361.16 (a)(2)iii the development, implementation, and revision of policies pertaining to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services needs to be shared with council. In light of recent VR efforts to strengthen processes FRC appreciates the improved communication and collaborative efforts; however, in order to fulfill duties FRC needs prior consultation to ensure that the voice of the customer is considered. Areas of policy interests include Order of Selection, financial participation related to exempt or nonexempt services and third party cooperative arrangements. This request for notification and solicitation of comment will allow for public input, before substantial changes may result.

FRC requests that all reports provided to RSA be made available to the Council as soon as possible.

Agency Response:

As FRC has referenced in its recommendation, VR has proposed a standard process for collaborating with FRC on policy revisions, and the process is currently under revision. VR will continue to work with FRC to finalize the process to collaborate on policy development activities.

Performance data provided to RSA, such as data included in the annual state plan, Program Improvement Plan updates, and RSA-2, RSA-113, and RSA-911 reports, is currently and will continue to be shared with FRC. VR shares performance data with FRC members and program staff through quarterly Director's Reports, updates to the State Plan Recommendations Table, and direct emails from SLT and program staff.

Recommendation 3: Budget

The Council applauds the Divisions efforts to establish strong protocol to ensure sound fiscal accountability and access for Floridians to rehabilitation services. Both entities are pleased with the anticipated funding boost from the State of Florida and the Federal Government that will reopen categories for service. The Council wants to emphasize the

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importance of the partnership and collaborative benefits of establishing sound protocol and sharing all fiscal concerns with FRC.

Agency Response:

VR will continue to provide FRC with fiscal projections and updates on fiscal concerns. VR provides fiscal data to FRC during VR Director's reports at quarterly meetings, monthly conference calls, and via email as needed.

Recommendation 4: Customer Services

FRC recommendations:

- FRC encourages VR to increase innovative job placement approaches and strategies to improve the rehabilitation rate.
- Increase employee training in understanding the benefits of customer self-advocacy and development of their own Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE.)
- VR is also encouraged to include discussion during Counselor training modules of the importance of soliciting, hearing and listening to the customer voice.

FRC commendations:

- The proactive inclusion of social media communications such as the development of a Facebook page, a Twitter account and LinkedIn access.
- The formal notification to customers of counselor change or reassignment.
- The Division efforts to coordinate and ensure the use of quality and accurate data are commendable and will benefit all communications with stakeholders.
- The collaborative efforts with the Department of Economic Opportunity and other interested parties to develop a Jobs Portal for businesses and individuals living with disabilities to access employment is impressive and in line with state and federal initiatives.
- The decrease in customer complaints and the development of a new customer satisfaction survey contract.

Agency Response:

VR welcomes FRC suggestions on innovative job placement approaches and strategies, as it is a common goal to increase the number of employment outcomes for VR customers. As noted in Attachment 4.11(d), VR intends to procure one new Innovation & Expansion contract per area, during the plan year. VR will keep FRC informed when this process begins.

VR recognizes customer feedback as a valuable part of its continuous improvement. VR, in collaboration with FRC, is currently negotiating a new contract to evaluate customer satisfaction. Results from the existing customer satisfaction survey are uploaded to the VR shared drive, where it is accessible to all employees.

Various modules of the VR counselor curriculum provide training on customer feedback and input, informed choice, disability etiquette, and specialized techniques for

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communicating with customers with mental health or intellectual disabilities. Active listening is a topic for future training modules. With recent implementation of VR's learning management system, new approaches to providing counselor training are being explored. FRC recommendations related to employee training will be carried forward into those discussions.

Recommendation 5: Public Comment

The Council is appreciative of the VR support offered at all FRC public forums, however there needs to be continued collaboration regarding the benefits of public comment. The Council recognizes VR and other stakeholders for their support in expanding public outreach efforts to obtain customer involvement and input. FRC will continue to hold open forums but would encourage the agency to conduct public meetings when proposed changes to the agency's procedures may impact customers.

Agency Response:

VR will continue to conduct public meetings, similar to the Order of Selection Public Forum held in November 2013, at its discretion and when deemed necessary, in accordance with federal and state regulations.

Recommendation 6: Job Placement Strategies

VR needs to strengthen engagement efforts with business leaders to develop long-range employment options for our customers and ways to maximize the employers return on investment. The FRC encourages VR to become a leader in identifying growing employment markets and potential areas for workplace re-engineering. Emphasis on the availability of accommodations, self-employment and the use of the Discovery program will increase customer job possibilities and financial independence.

Agency Response:

VR acknowledges the importance of educating and partnering with business leaders throughout the state. Area offices are actively involved in Disability Employment Awareness events, employer recruitment and educational activities with the purpose of increasing employment of individuals with disabilities.

In addition, VR anticipates the statewide expansion of Discovery services to be completed during FFY 2015. Once providers and staff in all areas are trained on the Discovery program, focus will shift to capacity building and increasing the number of vendor and transition age participants.

Area-level On-the-Job Training (OJT) expansion projects aim to increase opportunities for transition and post-secondary students, and recruit employers with appropriate job openings. These projects involve VR employees, outreach coordinators, and representatives from local colleges, universities, and technical schools. Post-secondary education programs, with VR support, are focusing on developing employment driven education models.

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The online job portal developed by the FL Dept. of Economic Opportunity will enhance communication between job seekers and employers. VR will provide desk support for the job portal.

Recommendation 7: Transition

Transition services are a critical component of employment success for many individuals and the Council wishes to increase the number of students with disabilities who have access to VR services. Based on discussions and customer feedback:

- VR is encouraged to develop Innovation and Expansion grant opportunities for community colleges to assist 18-22 year old individuals transitioning from school to work.
- Council encourages VR to work with exiting high school students who may be impacted by the waitlist and category closures in regard to information and referral guidance.
- It is recognized that VR needs to engage students earlier in their schooling.
- In terms of recently developing diploma and certificate stipulations within the state FRC will dialogue with VR and with the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) to understand the impact on transition students.
- Council encourages VR to craft a consistent message of achievement for transition students and families beyond budgetary constraints.
- The lack of detail on future third party cooperative arrangements offered to all 67 school districts as currently stated in this 2015 plan, is of concern.
- FRC is concerned with a recent policy draft regarding financial participation which may require transition students to pay for training services in some circumstances.

Agency Response:

As noted in Attachment 4.11(d), VR intends to procure one new Innovation & Expansion contract per area, during the plan year. VR will keep FRC informed when this process begins.

As noted in Attachment 4.1(c)3, providing information and referral guidance to customers on the waiting list is an established part of the Order of Selection procedure. Acknowledging FRC concerns with the VR information and referral process, and the added importance of this information while service categories remain closed, VR Senior Leaders will re-communicate this topic to all field staff.

VR adopted an early referral process in SFY 2009 allowing counselors to provide service information to interested students and families at age 14 and to other eligible students during their last two years of school. Students at risk of dropping out of school can be referred to VR at any age. They can also receive referrals for students involved in Community Based Work Experience at age 16.

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Area-level OJT expansion projects aim to increase opportunities for transition and post-secondary students and recruit employers with appropriate job openings. These projects involve VR employees, outreach coordinators, and representatives from local colleges, universities, and technical schools. As discussed with FRC, specific details on the upcoming Third Party Cooperative Arrangement (TPCA) contract were not included in the state plan draft at this time because the contract is pending approval from FDOE. It was agreed upon by VR and FRC during the May 2014 meeting, that if the contract is approved before state plan submission, details will be added to the plan and shared with FRC.

Recommendation 8: Federal Performance Indicators

The Council is still concerned that VR is on a performance improvement plan based on the two failing federal indicators. The Council recommends and continues to encourage efforts towards data integrity and accuracy that will enhance effective and efficient service delivery. The Council wants to acknowledge that VR is assessing their customer database to increase successful rehabilitation closures.

Agency Response:

As noted in Attachment 4.11(d), VR has already implemented, or started work on several strategies that will increase customer employment outcomes, as measured by the Federal Performance Indicators. In addition to data validation initiatives, other strategies include expansion of Discovery and Customized Employment services, increased use of Benefits Planning for Social Security recipients, revising the VR Vendor Profile to provide more information to customers, and implementation of Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Peer Specialist models for customers with mental health disabilities.

Recommendation 9: Counselor Recruitment, Retention and Employee Development

In alignment with Attachment 4.10, the FRC recognizes VR's efforts to encourage personnel development and training for division employees. The Council recognizes the reported increase in VR employee morale per the climate survey; however, there remains a major concern about high employee turnover and pay parity relative to counselor compensation in other states. To strengthen employee retention efforts FRC encourages further strategic planning in partnership with VR on ways to elevate compensation to reach the national averages and to identify alternative recruitment and retention efforts for counselors.

Agency Response:

VR welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with FRC on future strategies to increase employee recruitment, retention, and compensation. Beyond this, additional changes to employee salary are legislative decisions, and VR welcomes FRC support to pursue compensation changes.

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Several initiatives have been implemented that will increase employee engagement and morale, including a learning management system, flexible work schedules, onboarding and mentoring program revisions, curriculum revision, increased leadership and career development opportunities (in conjunction with FL Certified Public Manager training), and succession planning. These opportunities will allow employees to increase their professional skills, and provide more transparency to career paths available within VR.

Recommendation 10: 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. Per public comment the FRC encourages VR to make the IPE available in Spanish, to expand outreach and rural access to services while encouraging self-advocacy. FRC supports an increased focus on serving under and un-served populations, the Migrant Worker and Native American populations in the state and students with disabilities transitioning from school to work. The FRC strongly encourages engagement of public school district guidance counselors to expand awareness of options and services available to assist students and their families to adapt to an employment environment. Council and VR will continue to engage, recruit, and recognize business leaders across the state to promote employing persons with disabilities.

Agency Response:

VR acknowledges the importance of outreach to all individuals in need of VR services, as well as outreach to community business leaders. Area offices are actively involved in Disability Employment Awareness events, employer recruitment and educational activities with the purpose of increasing employment of individuals with disabilities.

In addition, VR anticipates the statewide expansion of Discovery services to be completed during FFY 2015. Once providers and staff in all areas are trained on the Discovery program, focus will shift to capacity building and increasing the number of vendor and transition age participants.

Area-level OJT expansion projects aim to increase opportunities for transition and post-secondary students and recruit employers with appropriate job openings. These projects involve VR employees, outreach coordinators, and representatives from local colleges, universities, and technical schools. Post-secondary education programs, with VR support, are focusing on developing employment driven education models.

Additional outreach efforts by VR include collaboration with the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe, and assistance with planning the CANAR fall conference.

VR appreciates the legislative outreach and educational efforts of FRC and congratulates them on meeting with every Florida's legislator during the recent state legislative session and two previous sessions.

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Recommendation 11: 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 State of Florida Governor's Appointment Office are ongoing and a top priority in partnership with VR. At the time of the 2015 State Plan Task Force meeting in May the Council is anticipating additional appointments or reappointments, thus increasing the number of stakeholders officially represented on the Council. The FRC appreciates VR's continued support to maintain the Council's federally-mandated membership requirements.

Agency Response:

VR will continue to support and collaborate with the FRC in its focus to meet federally mandated membership regulations.

Recommendation 12: 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 recognition 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.

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Attachment 4.7 (b) (3): Request for Waiver of Statewideness

Overview

The Florida 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 (TPCA) with some local school districts, but services are not currently available in all areas of the state. The State Plan cannot assure that the expanded services provided through the TPCAs will be available in all political subdivisions (school districts) of the state. A Waiver of Statewideness is requested in this State Plan.

Types of Services Provided

School and Community-Based Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

VR currently has TPCAs with 17 school districts. Once existing arrangements expire in June 2014, VR will offer new TPCA to Florida's 67 school districts. The one-year arrangement will provide community-based work experiences to eligible students who have Supported Employment (SE) service needs identified in their Individual Educational Plan and Individualized Plan for Employment. The new model will contract to reimburse school districts for services provided to VR-eligible students with the most significant disabilities and facilitate a seamless transition into postsecondary employment with supports.

On-the-Job Training (OJT) through VR providers delivers needed community-based work experiences to VR-eligible students who do not require the intense supports provided through the new TPCA. OJT services will be available statewide.

Written Assurances

VR assures the Rehabilitation Services Administration that it has TPCAs with certain school districts and will provide written assurances as required. Specifically, each arrangement is formalized through the contract procurement 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 TPCA services.
3. All local school districts with TPCAs will abide by the state's Order of Selection policy.
4. TPCA services are services not typically provided by local school districts, and that TPCA services are only available to persons applying for, or already receiving VR services.

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5. All other state plan requirements will apply to all services provided under the scope of the arrangement.
6. Program expenditures and employees providing services under the cooperative arrangement are under the administrative supervision of VR.

Third Party Cooperative Arrangement

During state fiscal year 2013-14, VR had arrangements with the school districts in the following counties:

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

The current arrangements will expire on June 30, 2014. New Third Party Cooperative Arrangements will be offered to all 67 school districts at that time.

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

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) maintains cooperative agreements with agencies and other entities not carrying out activities under the Workforce Investment System. The state of Florida no longer participates in the National Rural Development Program. A description of current VR partners and agreements is below.

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. VR customers and other Floridians with disabilities receive direct support through funded community rehabilitation program employment projects and individual grants from The Able Trust. The Able Trust is a non-profit corporation that relies upon contributions and gifts. VR does not provide any Title I funds to The Able Trust. The agreement promotes cooperation between The Able Trust and VR, which includes as provided for in Florida Statutes, the annual submission of The Able Trust's budget, annual report, annual audit, and any changes to the Articles of Incorporation or by-laws to the VR director. The Able Trust informs the VR director of all board meetings, as required by Florida statute. VR reviews the above documents and makes the necessary certification, based on statute.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities

The 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 both agencies.

Both agencies have a common goal of assisting eligible persons to achieve greater independence through employment. The specific goal of this agreement is to coordinate support and services throughout the state, maintaining maximum customer satisfaction and informed choice.

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 customers. Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology offers an Alternative

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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 are 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 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.

The Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe

The Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe is located in southern Georgia 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, 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 customers and technical assistance.

Mental Health Program, Florida Department of Children and Families

VR coordinates with the state mental health authority 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

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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; Department of Economic Opportunity

The Florida Interagency Agreement for the Transfer of Assistive Technology, signed in 2006, establishes a framework for an 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.

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 funding requirements. 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.

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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. VR has also 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 customers in their efforts to achieve self-sufficiency through core VR services followed by ongoing support services from employment networks. During the 2014-2015 federal fiscal 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. These agencies include:

- 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 VR, Division of Blind Services, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Children’s Medical Services, and Mental Health Services.

VR continues to dedicate a program administrator who is the central point of contact for the 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. The administrator coordinates and plans for effective transition services delivery with VR’s employees and external stakeholders statewide. The administrator is responsible for training internal employees 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, interagency collaboration, transition legislation and policy, and student development and

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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. The SAC also includes 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 and local education agencies. Brochures for the VR School to Work Transition Program are available to students and families so they can begin gathering information at age 14. Referrals for VR services begin at age 16 for students with disabilities 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 are 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, serve 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 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 student with planning,

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preparing for, and achieving successful postsecondary employment.

Information on Formal Interagency Agreements with Respect to:

Employment First

As an employment leader, VR strongly encourages partner agencies, organizations, and employers to promote integrated employment in the community as the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities. People with disabilities who are employed experience enhanced independence and quality of life. They are also contributing to the rich diversity of the workforce so the entire community benefits.

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 employees. 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 VR and Educational Agency Representatives 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 were implemented on October 31, 2013 to comply with the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The enhancements will enable VR to conduct differential analysis to better evaluate agency

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performance and identify how to best improve service delivery and outcomes for students with disabilities.

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 achieve a successful employment outcome.
3. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities tries 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, "to promote independence and productivity, the agency shall provide support and services, within available resources, to assist customers 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 live successfully 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

Specific intent of the interagency agreement is to:

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 employees, when serving students transitioning from school to work or postsecondary activities.

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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 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 employees, on the outreach methods used to inform students with disabilities who may need, and could benefit from these agencies.

Brochures, flyers, website resources, presentations, transition fairs, or informational

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letters are available to the local education agency, students, and their parents or guardians, to explain the role that VR and other agencies play in the transition process, and the agencies' referral/application policies and procedures.

VR has executed 17 Third Party Cooperative Arrangements for SFY 2014. 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, it 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 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 customers 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 customer placements facilitated by vendors/contract providers.

VR policy ensures that customers have a choice of qualified service providers to select from. Customers are also informed if the provider has employees experienced in working with special disability populations, foreign languages, and other communication skills. VR Customers have a choice of necessary services, service providers, and the setting in which to receive the services included in the written Individualized Plan for Employment.

Currently, VR has over 230 combined rate contracts that include employment, supported employment, and OJT services. Additionally, 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
- 17 Third Party Cooperative Arrangements with local school districts
- 15 contracts with Employment Networks
- Additional contracts with agencies for services such as delegable VR services, outreach for migrant and seasonal farm workers, interpreting services, and rehabilitation engineering

VR currently has one innovation and expansion project through the University of South Florida, Center for Rehabilitation Engineering and Technology. This project involves the use of virtual reality simulators for customers with severe disabilities.

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

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

Throughout the state, many counselors 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. 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 customers.

It is the intent of VR to continue with the above referenced contractual agreements, cooperative arrangements, and liaison relationships through FFY 2015.

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

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has 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 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 the most significant disabilities; and (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, the coordination of programmatic and fiscal responsibilities prior to beginning any new program, and the 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 the 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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VR now partners with other state agencies and organizations in implementing Employment First, a national effort to assure individuals with disabilities are offered employment on a preferred basis in planning their lives. Employment First is consistent with VRs belief that individuals with disabilities, even the most significant disabilities, can achieve meaningful employment when provided with appropriate supports.

Executive Order 13-284 (Reaffirming Commitment to Employment for Floridians with Disabilities) was signed by the Governor of Florida in October 2013. The Order mandates that an Interagency Cooperative Agreement be developed and requires agencies and organizations to participate in the Agreement. VR is one of the mandated partners and played a significant role in drafting the Order.

The following Agencies were named as mandatory partners:

- The Department of Education- Division of Blind Services
- The Department of Education- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- The Department of Education- Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
- The Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- The Department of Children and Families- Mental Health and Substance Abuse
- The Department of Economic Opportunity
- Workforce Florida
- The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council

The Interagency Cooperative Agreement formalizes efforts to improve employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and promote collaboration and service innovation.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities and VR are reviewing the current articulation agreement 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 based on criteria as mandated in Executive Order 13-284 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.

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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 and its partners continuously seek alternative methods to provide extended services (e.g. social security incentives, natural supports, etc.). VR has encouraged supported employment providers to focus on developing natural supports and to focus efforts on encouraging employers to accept the support role since this is the most natural arrangement for employers and VR customers. VR will try to secure funding for extended services for all individuals with the 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 will 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, 2014, VR has 931 full-time equivalents (FTEs). Of this number, there are 415 counseling positions providing vocational rehabilitation services. Seventy-eight (78) supervisory and/or area level managerial positions support the counseling positions. There are 438 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. For the period April 1, 2012, through March 31, 2013, the percentage of counseling positions vacated was 37.6%, 20.5% for field supervisors, and 17.8% for program administration. For the period April 1, 2013, through March 31, 2014, the percentage of vacated counseling positions was 24.8%, 6.4% for field supervisors, and 15.2% for program administration. Positions are vacated for many reasons, including termination, promotion, lateral position transfers, or retirement. 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 86 individuals in DROP, 70 individuals with 30 or more years of service, and 137 individuals over the age of 62.

VR collects data from the Rehabilitation Information Management System (RIMS) to calculate the counselor-customer ratio. This is another tool for assessing current and projected staffing needs. The average counselor-customer 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

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- The state institutions of higher education that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by program type
- 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 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 vacated position percentages of 24.8%, 6.4%, and 15.2% for SFY 2014-2015.

<u>Job Group</u>	<u>Projected Annual Vacancies</u>
VR Counselor	102*
Field Supervisors	5*
Program Administration	66*

*This number is an annual average derived by multiplying the number of positions for the job group by the percentage of vacated positions.

Approximately 22-25 percent of the estimates above represent Transition Counselor needs. When factoring in population growth, 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 employee vacancies and turnover in particularly difficult to fill geographic areas, VR has contracted for employees. The contracts ensure that qualified personnel are hired to provide necessary rehabilitation services. A VR supervisor or counselor/analyst supervises these employees and performs the activities that federal regulations (34 CFR 361.13) specify are the responsibility of 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 Career Source 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 and Degree	Students Currently Enrolled	VR/RSA Sponsored Employees	VR/RSA Sponsored Graduates	Previous Year Graduates
Florida Atlantic University- Graduate-level Rehabilitation Training Program; MEd and PhD	MEd- 20 PhD- 4	MEd- 1 PhD- 0	MEd- 7 PhD- 0	MEd- 8 PhD- 1
Florida International University- Rehabilitation Counseling Program; MS in Counselor Education	MS- 5	MS- 1	MS- 0	MS- 4
University of South Florida- Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling Program; MA	MA- 153	MA- 2	MA- 0	MA- 53

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 employees collaborate with universities in securing grant funding, use university employees to assist in training and education activities, and provide practicum and internship slots for students.

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.

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

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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 earn their certification. Approximately 48% 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 2014 will have until 2019 to meet the standard; those hired in 2015 will have until 2020, and so on.

The State of Florida allows employees 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 now has three CORE-accredited programs (Florida Atlantic University and the University of South Florida, and the recently accredited Florida International University).

In recent years, VR has implemented a more aggressive approach in 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 as much as possible, since 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) 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, Florida VR uses 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 uses the resources of the University of North Texas and San Diego State through the Consortium on Distance Education in Rehabilitation. VR will continue to use additional programs, as appropriate.

Staff Development

HRD efforts will continue to be oriented toward appropriate and adequate training for all employees, 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.

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Although there has been an emphasis on helping counselors in meeting the CSPD standard and on developing the technical, managerial, and leadership skills of the supervisors and managers, VR provides staff development opportunities 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 used, as available and appropriate. The HRD Section provides consultation and technical assistance to VR employee as needed.

VR has purchased, and is in the process of implementing, a learning management system (LMS). The LMS will be implemented, using a phased-in approach, during calendar 2014. The system will not only track learning participation, but will also serve as a host for online learning activities for all employees. Additionally, VR purchased licenses for WebEx 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. The needs assessment data determines program development and modification.

Annual performance evaluations are conducted on each employee, with intermittent evaluation, if indicated. Performance is evaluated according to standards and goals

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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 VRs 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 counselor training, supervisory training, policy training, new legislation, casework review training, etc.

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 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 supervisors, and area directors. Topics are selected based on policy or procedure changes, new initiatives, audit and review findings, and general professional development.

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. The contract ensures 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

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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 partnerships with local vendors to offer this service.

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. Whenever appropriate, VR will reschedule appointments or use text communication devices with individuals in situations when either staff interpreters or local interpreters are not available. VR also has assistive listening devices available in most offices for VR employees to communicate with Individuals who are hard of hearing or late-deafened and do not know sign-language.

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 updated the Rehabilitation Information Management System (RIMS) to collect additional transition data elements effective October 1, 2013 based on directives from the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Enhancements included identifying students with 504 Plans and will improve agency efforts to deliver services to all eligible students

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with disabilities. 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 that 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.

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 employees 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 Training which includes resources from the VR School to Work Transition Program. The *VR School to Work Transition Guidelines and Best Practices* 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): Statewide 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: state demographic profiles, customer surveys, a VR field staff survey, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups. Results of the CSNA guided agency planning and development of state plans for federal fiscal years 2013 through 2015.

VR and the Florida Rehabilitation Council partner to conduct the needs assessment every three years. Attachment 4.11 (a), summarizing the results and recommendations of the current needs assessment, was included in full with the FFY 2013 state plan. An update to the recommended strategies is included below. The 2016 State Plan will include a full summary of the next CSNA results.

CSNA Recommendation	Current Strategic Reference	Previous Strategic Reference
Provide tools, support, tutoring, and educational opportunities for specific job skills.	1.3.2. Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.	No previous reference
Ensure employability skills training activities are offered by contracted service providers.	1.3.3. Increase transition services for students with significant disabilities.	No previous reference
Identify and prioritize VR services to standardize and reduce variance in types and quality of services provided.	3.1.2. Complete RIMS modules for Field Services Processes to better align the tools with business processes.	No previous reference
Explore and implement the use of new technologies to provide services in rural areas.	1.3.1. Facilitate communication between job seekers with disabilities and employers through enhanced technology.	No previous reference
Assess the effectiveness and volume of job coaching services provided to customers.	1.2.3. Design and implement contract monitoring and fraud detection processes.	Objective 4.1 Design and implement contract monitoring and fraud detection processes.

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CSNA Recommendation	Current Strategic Reference	Previous Strategic Reference
Provide a specific and standardized training curriculum to VR field staff on difficult to place customer groups.	2.1.1. Institute a process for on-boarding, mentoring, training, succession planning, and leadership development for all VR employees, including the implementation of a Learning Management System.	Objective 1.1 Provide statewide training on hard to place customer groups (e.g., ex-offender re-entry, cognitive, supported employment phase 2).
Provide specific interpersonal skills training for customers who have primary disabilities in mental health, cognitive, developmental, or brain injury categories.	VR will implement additional mental health training for counselors, and develop transitional employment, Individual Placement and Support and peer specialist models to improve success with individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. VR will expand the use of Discovery and Customized Employment.	Objective 3.3 Design and implement psychosocial mental health training to selected VR employees to deliver effective services for individuals with mental health and substance abuse disabilities. Implement a recovery and trauma informed care model, and provide training to VR employees.
Develop specific agreements with other agencies and organizations to optimize support resources and ensure that counselors have full referral access to those resources (e.g., food, clothing, transportation).	Operationally, VR continues to develop agreements with and partner with other agencies and organizations to provide customers more access to community resources.	VR will assume a leadership role to foster cooperation and collaboration at the federal, state, and local levels for partners involved in the employment of individuals with disabilities. 3.6 Design and implement a comprehensive directory of community resources.

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CSNA Recommendation	Current Strategic Reference	Previous Strategic Reference
<p>Eliminate activities and tasks in the field that are unnecessary for delivering timely and high-quality services (e.g., excessive reviews and approvals, unnecessary paperwork or data entry, etc.).</p>	<p>3.1.2. Complete RIMS modules for Field Services Processes to better align the tools with business processes.</p>	<p>Conduct a gap analysis and develop user requirements for a case management system that meets VR's business needs.</p> <p>Investigate feasibility of data sharing with partners to expedite eligibility determination.</p> <p>Investigate and modify inefficiencies within RIMS to minimize duplicate data entry.</p>
<p>Fully deploy customer contact standards across all VR areas and contract providers.</p>	<p>VR revised a Field Service Operating Procedure in 2013, to address specific customer contact steps during case transfers.</p>	<p>Objective 3.2 Design and standardize customer contact process and standards.</p>
<p>Develop and implement a comprehensive VR marketing plan to specific stakeholder groups, employment service providers, vendors, and employers.</p>	<p>1.2.4. Conduct vendor outreach to increase available services for customers.</p> <p>1.2.5. Expand vendor pool for employment and supported employment services.</p>	<p>Objective 1.2 Standardize and systematically market to employers and existing employer networks (e.g., Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Center, Business Leadership Networks, etc.) both statewide and on a local basis.</p>

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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 2008-2012 American Community Survey estimates for Florida, a total of 1,112,586 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, 2014, through September 30, 2015, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) anticipates a workload of 60,085 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 (FFY) 2015.

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

Priority Category 1	33,396
Priority Category 2	26,469
Priority Category 3	<u>220</u>
Total	60,085

The estimated number of customers 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	\$54,272,417
Priority Category 2	\$49,285,834
Priority Category 3	<u>\$286,570</u>
Total Estimated Cost	\$103,844,821

Additionally, the cost for assessment services for FFY 2015 is projected at \$12,869,964. Total revenue needed for IPE and assessment services for FFY 2015 is \$116,714,785. The available revenue for FFY 2015 for IPE and assessment services is estimated to be \$115,053,434. The available revenue is less than the estimated revenue needed for FFY 2015, requiring VR to continue Order of Selection.

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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.

Three Year Strategic Goals and Priorities (FFY 2014-2016)

During FFY 2011, 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 employees and customers, is used to evaluate current goals, objectives, and projects.

Following the planning process established last year, the Senior Leadership Team completed a thorough review of the strategic plan, and then held a planning retreat to determine which projects will be included in the updated strategic plan. The Team confirmed all changes and made final revisions during a final planning meeting before presenting the updated strategic plan for FRC review.

FRC members representing all standing committees then formed a State Plan Task Force to study the draft 2015 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 2015 State Plan.

Goal 1: Improve Customer Success and Satisfaction

Objective 1.1: Improve the assessment of customer satisfaction

Strategy: 1. Negotiate a new contract for multiple, innovative means of assessing customer satisfaction.

Performance Measure: Ensure successful execution of the new contract and monitor for contractual compliance.

Objective 1.2: Improve vendor and contracted services processes

Strategy: 1. Develop background screening process for specific providers.

Performance Measure: Implement background screening program.

Strategy: 2. Review and revise vendor management process.

Performance Measure: A plan and routine progress reports will be submitted to VR Senior Management Team for review.

Strategy: 3. Design and implement contract monitoring and fraud detection processes.

Performance Measure: Finalize risk assessment of all contracts and establish a

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baseline of current performance. Develop standardized tools for routine monitoring, and train appropriate employees on their use. Develop schedule of routine contract monitoring.

Strategy: 4. Conduct vendor outreach to increase available services for customers.

Performance Measure: Specific outreach activities to find new vendors.

Recommendation to add referral identification question(s) to document to track referral source.

Strategy: 5. Expand vendor pool for employment and supported employment services.

Performance Measure: Increase in number of employment and supported employment vendors available where needed

Objective 1.3: Increase employment opportunities for VR customers

Strategy: 1. Facilitate communication between job seekers with disabilities and employers through enhanced technology.

Performance Measure: Review and revise FL Job Connections site and connect it to the national Talent Acquisition Portal and the FL Dept. of Economic Opportunity disability web portal.

Strategy: 2. Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.

Performance Measure: Baseline use of vendor profile and measure increase in use.

Strategy: 3. Increase transition services for students with significant disabilities.

Performance Measure: Revise TPCA requirements, offer to all school districts, and implement new contracts.

Goal 2: Improve Employee Development and Workplace Environment

Objective 2.1: Improve the system for developing VR employees

Strategy: 1. Institute a process for on-boarding, mentoring, training, succession planning, and leadership development for all VR employees, including the implementation of an LMS.

Performance Measure: Improvement in climate survey items Q8 (Opportunities to learn and grow) and Q11 (Satisfaction with training provided by VR)

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

Strategy: 1. Develop a process to report defective/unsafe working conditions, and provide safety and facilities management training to area employees.

Performance Measure: Improvement in Climate survey item Q17 (Physically safe work environment)

Strategy: 2. Strengthen facilities processes and provide appropriate field staff additional supports.

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Performance Measure: Resources include move manual, statewide safety manual, statewide first aid info, safety furniture inspection instructions.

Strategy: 3. Improve the accessibility of VR facilities, based on the results of a comprehensive evaluation with customer participation.

Performance Measure: Improvement in climate survey item Q4 (Accessible work environment); percent of ADA compliant work units

Goal 3: Improve VR Support Processes

Objective 3.1: Improve information technology applications

Strategy: 1. Use SharePoint to improve information sharing, collaboration and team projects.

Performance Measure: Increase in team sites

Strategy: 2. Complete RIMS modules for Field Services Processes to better align the tools with business processes.

Performance Measure: Percent of RIMS modules completed

Objective 3.2: Improve VR business intelligence

Strategy: 1. Integrate key elements of VR management reports (financial, human resource, operational performance, and customer satisfaction) for use by all management teams and employees, including the development of a live performance dashboard.

Performance Measure: Number of identified management reports revised and implemented.

Florida's overall economic climate continues to influence program performance. As of March 2014, Florida's unemployment rate was 6.2%, which equates to approximately 588,000 individuals not working. Florida's unemployment rate continues to be lower than the national average of 6.7%.

Employment outcomes for VR customers mirror state economic improvements, increasing by 735 during FFY 2013, for an annual 6,792 employment outcomes. Despite the increase in employment outcomes, VR continues to experience a rehabilitation rate below target. This is due to a focused effort to close inactive cases.

Although these efforts temporarily caused the rehabilitation rate to drop, VR anticipates an eventual shift in the ratio of successful closures to unsuccessful closures. This will result in an increased percentage of employment outcomes, as measured by Federal Performance Indicator 1.2.

In addition to the projects noted in VR's strategic plan, specific strategies have been identified to improve VR service planning, delivery and monitoring. The following strategies have been submitted as a plan to specifically address improvements needed,

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that will positively impact customer services and VR performance on Federal Standards and Indicators.

- Complete an analysis of unsuccessful case closures to determine specific counselor/consumer contact standards to implement.
- Increase job development and job matching services for individuals with disabilities via the state jobs portal.
- Implement additional mental health training for counselors, and develop transitional employment, Individual Placement and Support and peer specialist models to improve success with individuals with severe and persistent mental illness.
- Expand the use of Discovery and Customized Employment.
- Establish additional casework quality assurance review practices to validate data entry.
- Develop a data validation program to detect errors prior to reporting.
- Expand its use of Benefits Planning referrals for Social Security recipients that will promote self-support.
- Rewrite business rules in the automated case management system modules to reduce data input error.

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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 Priority Category 1 individuals and opened Priority Category 1. Priority Category 2 was opened on August 2, 2010. Priority Category 3 remained closed at that time.

Due to limited financial and human resources, VR closed Priority Category 2 on November 15, 2013, and closed Priority Category 1 on February 19, 2014. In response to the need to initiate services to persons on the wait list, additional funding of \$1,400,000 from nonrecurring general revenue state matching funds was appropriated to the Department of Education for SFY 2014. This funding allowed for additional federal funding of \$5,172,770. As a result, VR will begin serving customers on the Priority Category 1 wait list, on a limited basis, beginning in June 2014.

The Order of Selection remains in effect statewide and does not select one type of disability 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 April 14, 2014, 1,408 individuals with disabilities in Priority Category 3 remained on the waiting list.

Outcome and Service Goals, and Time Frames for FFY 2015

Priority 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	33,396	\$1,625	\$54,272,417	3,852	7,654	25.7
Priority 2	26,469	\$1,862	\$49,285,834	4,131	5,024	16.7
Priority 3	220	\$1,303	\$286,570	244	23	57.6

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Service Costs for FFY 2015

Total projected costs for IPE services are \$103,844,821. Cost for assessment services for FFY 2015 is projected as \$12,869,964. Total estimated revenue needed for FFY 2015 is \$116,714,785. The available revenue for FFY 2015 for IPE and assessment services is estimated to be \$115,053,434. The available revenue is less than the estimated revenue needed for FFY 2015, requiring VR to continue Order of Selection.

Order of Selection Policies

Individuals needing 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 Information and 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 with the most significant disabilities are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services, those with significant disabilities second and all other eligible individuals selected last.

Order of Selection Priority Category Description

Individuals With Most Significant Disabilities (Priority Category 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 that are not likely to be corrected through surgical intervention and/or other treatment modes.

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Individuals with Significant Disabilities (Priority Category 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;
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 Category 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) 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 the most significant disabilities.
- 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 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.
- 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.

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- 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. By participating in these activities, more employers become aware that people with developmental disabilities and other underserved populations are able to work in their communities.

Goal 4: Leverage resources for extended ongoing support services.

Plans

- Continue to work with APD to make sure that referred customers know about the extended service 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.
- Enhance relationships with businesses and employers to let them know that on-the-job supports for individuals in supported employment are available. VR will continue efforts to strengthen community partnerships to increase access to appropriate employment services.
- VR and APD are conducting a series of training for employees of both organizations. Identification of all possible sources for extended services is a primary objective of that training.

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Attachment 4.11 (d): State's Strategies

Council Support

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) continues to provide support for the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) and Florida Independent Living Council (FILC). VR allocates funds for the operation 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 contract, which aligns with the three-year state plan for Independent Living.

Use of Innovation and Expansion Funds

VR currently has one innovation and expansion project, described below. VR intends to procure a new innovation and expansion contract for each of its six areas, and anticipates implementation of the new contracts during FFY 2015.

1. **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.

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 that supplement and enhance individual functions. It includes services like job redesign or worksite modifications that improve the work environment.

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

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disability. Many high-tech and low-tech devices are available to help people with disabilities in daily living tasks, communication, education, work, and recreation.

Results gained through the continued Innovation and Expansion contract will contribute to improved employment opportunities for VR customers. In addition to the innovation and expansion project, VR's SFY 2014-16 Strategic Plan includes a number of strategies that are anticipated to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities:

- 1.1.1. Negotiate a new contract for multiple, innovative means of assessing customer satisfaction.
- 1.3.1. Facilitate communication between job seekers with disabilities and employers through enhanced technology.
- 3.1.1. Use SharePoint to improve information sharing, collaboration and team projects.
- 3.2.1. Integrate key elements of VR management reports (financial, human resource, operational performance, and customer satisfaction) for use by all management teams and employees, including the development of a live performance dashboard.
- 1.2.4. Conduct vendor outreach to increase available services for customers.
- 1.2.5. Expand vendor pool for employment and supported employment services.
- 1.3.3. Increase transition services for students with significant disabilities.
- 2.1.1. Institute a process for on-boarding, mentoring, training, succession planning, and leadership development for all VR employees, including the implementation of an LMS.

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. Strategic projects and local-level outreach activities include the following:

- 1.3.1. Facilitate communication between job seekers with disabilities and employers through enhanced technology.
- 1.2.4. Conduct vendor outreach to increase available services for customers.
- 1.2.5. Expand vendor pool for employment and supported employment services.
- 2.2.3. Improve the accessibility of VR facilities, based on the results of a comprehensive evaluation with customer participation.
- 1.3.3. Increase transition services for students with significant disabilities.
- 1.1.1. Negotiate a new contract for multiple, innovative means of assessing customer satisfaction.
- 3.2.1. Integrate key elements of VR management reports (financial, human resource, operational performance, and customer satisfaction) for use by all

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management teams and employees, including the development of a live performance dashboard.

- 3.1.2. Complete RIMS modules for Field Services Processes to better align the tools with business processes.
- Continue to explore partnership opportunities with community/faith-based organizations. Develop contact lists of faith-based and other diverse programs as resources for partnership opportunities.
- Continue to identify outreach activities conducted by VR area offices 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 conduct outreach to migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families through contracts with community-based organizations and other partners.
- Continue to implement activities outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe.

Improving Community Rehabilitation Programs

VR assesses its business processes and organizational capacity on an ongoing basis to make consistent improvements. Results of the FFY 2011 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment did not indicate a need to establish or develop community rehabilitation programs. Strategies to improve business relationships with community rehabilitation programs include:

- 1.2.1. Develop background screening process for specific providers.
- 1.2.3. Design and implement contract monitoring and fraud detection processes.
- 1.3.2. Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.
- 1.1.1. Negotiate a new contract for multiple, innovative means of assessing customer satisfaction.
- 1.3.1. Facilitate communication between job seekers with disabilities and employers through enhanced technology.
- 1.2.4. Conduct vendor outreach to increase available services for customers.
- 1.2.5. Expand vendor pool for employment and supported employment services.
- 1.2.2. Review and revise vendor management process.

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

Federal Performance Indicators

Indicator 1.1: Change in Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: Increase over prior year)
Previous Year (2012): +562 Actual Performance (2013): +735

Indicator 1.2: Percent of Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: 55.8%)
Previous Year: (2012): 45.78% Actual Performance (2013): 44.03%

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Indicator 1.3: Competitive Employment Outcome (Primary) (RSA Target: 72.6%)
Previous Year (2012): 99.69% Actual Performance (2013): 96.47%

Indicator 1.4: Significance of Disability (Primary) (RSA Target: 62.4%)
Previous Year (2012): 98.48% Actual Performance (2013): 98.68%

Indicator 1.5: Earnings Ratio (Primary) (RSA Target: 52%)
Previous Year (2012): 52.10% Actual Performance (2013): 51.88%

Indicator 1.6: Self-Support (RSA Target: 53%)
Previous Year (2012): 51.46% Actual Performance (2013): 61%

Indicator 2.1: Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (RSA Target: 80%)
Previous Year (2012): 94.49% Actual Performance (2013): 96.11%

Florida's overall economic climate continues to influence program performance. As of March 2014, Florida's unemployment rate was 6.2%, which equates to approximately 588,000 individuals not working. Florida's unemployment rate continues to be lower than the national average of 6.7%.

Employment outcomes for VR customers mirror state economic improvements, increasing by 735 during FFY 2013, for an annual 6,792 employment outcomes. Despite the increase in employment outcomes, VR continues to experience a rehabilitation rate below target. This is due to a focused effort to close inactive cases. Although these efforts temporarily caused the rehabilitation rate to drop, VR anticipates an eventual shift in the ratio of successful closures to unsuccessful closures. This will result in an increased percentage of employment outcomes, as measured by Federal Performance Indicator 1.2.

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 projects within its Strategic Plan will have a positive impact on program performance. Specific activities include the following.

- 1.3.2. Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.
- 1.1.1. Negotiate a new contract for multiple, innovative means of assessing customer satisfaction.
- 1.3.1. Facilitate communication between job seekers with disabilities and employers through enhanced technology.
- 3.2.1. Integrate key elements of VR management reports (financial, human resource, operational performance, and customer satisfaction) for use by all management teams and employees, including the development of a live performance dashboard.
- 3.1.2. Complete RIMS modules for Field Services Processes to better align the tools with business processes.

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- 1.3.3. Increase transition services for students with significant disabilities.
- Implement additional mental health training for counselors, and develop transitional employment, Individual Placement and Support and peer specialist models to improve success with individuals with severe and persistent mental illness.
- Expand the use of Discovery and Customized Employment.
- Establish additional casework quality assurance review practices to validate data entry.
- Develop a data validation program to detect errors prior to reporting.
- Expand its use of Benefits Planning referrals for Social Security recipients that will promote self-support.

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

VR remains geographically aligned with the workforce regions and holds memoranda of understanding (MOU) with 17 regional workforce boards. During the 2012 legislative session, the Florida Legislature approved a consistent naming convention for all workforce boards in an effort to re-brand them for customers. That change became effective in March 2014. Because of this, VR will update all MOUs to reflect these adjustments during this state plan cycle. The following strategies will increase partnership with the statewide workforce investment system to assist individuals with disabilities.

- 1.3.1. Facilitate communication between job seekers with disabilities and employers through enhanced technology.
- 1.2.4. Conduct vendor outreach to increase available services for customers.
- 1.2.5. Expand vendor pool for employment and supported employment services.
- 3.2.1. Integrate key elements of VR management reports (financial, human resource, operational performance, and customer satisfaction) for use by all management teams and employees, including the development of a live performance dashboard.
- 3.1.2. Complete RIMS modules for Field Services Processes to better align the tools with business processes.
- Update implementation of the three-party Memorandum of Agreement between VR, the Department of Economic Opportunity, and the Workforce Investment Board.
- Continue implementation of the Memoranda of Understanding with 17 Regional Workforce Boards.
- Collaborate with and offer training to Career Source and Employment Networks to provide services.
- Continue area directors' participation on the local Workforce Investment Boards.
- Continue to promote VR's presence in Career Source through co-location of VR's units in Career Source Centers; employees being out-stationed; and/or through regular visits by VR employees to Career Source Centers.

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Equitable Access

In 2013, VR made great progress in accommodation and access to services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Specific accomplishments included completion of revised best practices guides for services and communication and the hire of a specialized consultant in the field of deaf-blindness to develop best practices, provide consultation, training, and advocacy with stakeholders involved in these cases.

VR has also repurposed a recently vacated FTE into a Deaf-Blind Interpreter position, which will be filled during FFY 2014. Key administrators from VR-General and VR-Blind Services have scheduled monthly meetings to revise and update the MOA, develop strategies, discuss training needs, create informational guides as needed by both agencies on this population, and provide case consultation.

Additional VR strategies and activities to increase equal access to individuals requesting services are as follows.

- 2.2.3. Improve the accessibility of VR facilities, based on the results of a comprehensive evaluation with customer participation.
- 1.3.1. Facilitate communication between job seekers with disabilities and employers through enhanced technology.
- 1.1.1. Negotiate a new contract for multiple, innovative means of assessing customer satisfaction.
- 1.2.4. Conduct vendor outreach to increase available services for customers.
- 1.3.3. Increase transition services for students with significant disabilities.
- 2.2.1. Develop a process to report defective/unsafe working conditions, and provide safety and facilities management training to area employees.
- 2.2.2. Strengthen facilities infrastructure and provide appropriate field staff additional supports.
- 1.2.5. Expand vendor pool for employment and supported employment services.
- 3.2.1. Integrate key elements of VR management reports (financial, human resource, operational performance, and customer satisfaction) for use by all management teams and employees, including the development of a live performance dashboard.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), in collaboration with the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC), established five strategic goals for FFY 2013. These goals and priorities were developed based on an analysis of VR's performance on the federal 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 (FFY) 2013

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:

1. Percent of VR responsibilities met as outlined in MOU.
2. Percent of Memoranda of Agreement and Memoranda of Understanding in compliance.
3. Number of local level provider and employer network group meetings.

Actual: VR currently maintains 17 memoranda of understanding with regional workforce boards, and 21 memoranda of agreement with employment networks.

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

Indicator:

1. Cumulative percent of Centers for Independent Living in full compliance with evaluation standards met.

Actual: An evaluation application was developed and implementation is still in process. Internet connectivity was a previous barrier to implementation of the evaluation tool, but the application has been localized and does not require connectivity, making it accessible in field locations. The application is currently being tested, and VR anticipates full implementation during FFY 2014.

Current Status of Goal 1:

During the SFY 2013 planning retreat, 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 Employees

Objective 2.1: Assess overall employee satisfaction.

Indicator and Target:

1. Overall Employee Satisfaction.
Target: 93%

Actual: VR administered the employee climate survey in January 2013, and achieved an 80% response rate. Over 87% of respondents indicated satisfaction with VR as a place to work.

Objective 2.2: Improve employee satisfaction.

Indicator:

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

Actual:

1. Assess the feasibility of more flexible work schedules. Flexible work schedules were implemented in May 2013. Since implementation, 194 employees have used the option.
2. Redesign employee suggestion program. This program was discontinued in January 2014. Despite the lack of a formal suggestion program, VR employees have many ways to submit feedback and ideas for improvement, such as surveys, email, and process improvement events.
3. Assess alternative supervisor/leadership development curriculums. This strategy was revised to include all employee training, career pathing, and mentoring.

Climate Survey items and scores related to Objective 2.2 are as follows:

- Item 6. I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things at work- 77.37% agreement
- Item 8. In the past 2 years, VR has provided me opportunities to learn and grow- 83.61% agreement
- Item 14. I participate in making decisions that affect how I perform my job duties- 79.29% agreement
- Item 37. My input seems to matter when I provide it at work- 79.10% agreement
- Item 40. I am encouraged to take initiative in my work unit- 85.58% agreement

Objective 2.3: Improve advancement opportunities for VR employees.

Indicator:

1. Internal Promotion Rate

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Actual: During FFY 2012-13, 79 VR employees were promoted internally. Climate Survey Item 15. VR provides employees with opportunities for career advancement and promotion- 68.67% agreement

Objective 2.4: Improve service delivery by enhancing employee skills.

Indicator:

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

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%

Actual: VR Employee Climate Survey results indicate that almost 82% of respondents agreed that their work environment was physically safe, and over 85% indicated agreement that their work location was accessible. In addition, VR queried all offices and replaced necessary furniture and equipment. VR continues to operationally monitor its facilities, communications, programs, personnel practices, and technology to ensure compliance with ADA.

Current Status of Goal 2:

During the SFY 2012-13 planning retreat, Goal 2 was revised to include onboarding, mentoring, succession planning, leadership development, career pathing, and development of a learning management system.

GOAL 3: Improve Customer Success and Satisfaction

Objective 3.1: Improve the assessment of customer satisfaction.

Indicator and Target:

1. Percentage of customers indicating overall satisfaction.
Target: 80%

Actual: 76%- Closed cases; 77%- Open cases

In addition to data collected through the customer satisfaction survey, VR uses data collected by the Ombudsman Unit to analyze customer success and satisfaction. Below is a summary of customer inquiry and mediation requests fielded by the Ombudsman Unit during FFY 2013. The number of all customer complaints is projected to decrease from FFY 2013 to the end of FFY 2014.

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- | | |
|--|----------------|
| Target: 25% | Actual: 25.35% |
| 4. Percentage of employment outcomes for individuals with cognitive/developmental disabilities who have received services under an IPE | |
| Target: 45% | Actual: 45.06% |
| 5. Percentage of individuals with self-employment as a goal receiving services under an IPE | |
| Target: 1.50% | Actual: .42% |
| 6. Percentage of employment outcomes for individuals with self-employment as a goal who have received services under an IPE | |
| Target: 1.00% | Actual: .89% |
| 7. Percentage of individuals receiving services under an IPE who are transition-age youth | |
| Target: 33% | Actual: 40.36% |
| 8. Percentage of employment outcomes for transition-age individuals who have received services under an IPE | |
| Target: 28% | Actual: 29.71% |

Objective 3.4: Increase the number of individuals who are self-supporting at closure compared to at application.

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.
2. Average time for vendor registration.

Actual: Strategies under this objective were revised in the upcoming strategic plan to address vendor management, outreach and monitoring needs.

Objective 4.2: Improve contract and invoice payment processes.

Indicator and Target:

1. Percent of invoices paid on time.
Target: Contractual requirement is within 10 days

Actual: Strategies under this objective were revised in the upcoming strategic plan to address VR's business intelligence, information management, and support infrastructure needs. On average, invoices are paid within seven days. The timeframe begins when an invoice is deemed accurate and approved.

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

Indicator:

1. Percentage of project milestones completed on time.

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.
2. Percent of strategic projects on schedule.

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

Explanation of 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, the Institute for Rehabilitation Issues (IRI), the VR Program Evaluation Summit, and Council of State Administrators of VR. Collaboration with other agencies and national and community partners allows Florida VR to share and receive best practices.

Goal 2, related to workplace environment and strengthening recruitment and retention of employees, 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 Program

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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. For example, VR completed a benchmarking study of vendor performance management and reporting practices used by other state VR agencies. This study resulted in the development of a vendor profile of performance and services for use by counselors and VR customers. The study also resulted in the development of a vendor monitoring report to identify and prioritize contract monitoring activities.

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.

Barriers that impeded achievement of goals and priorities

As noted above, VR developed the 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. Using the consensus-building process implemented last year, VR senior leaders reviewed the progress made toward strategies, prioritized strategies still in progress, and agreed on the strategies that would continue into the revised plan. 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 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 reviewed and updated quarterly. 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, Strategic and State Plans page located at www.rehabworks.org/plans.shtml. The email address is vrplan@vr.fl DOE.org.

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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 Title 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 was provided to VR and APD counselors to increase their knowledge of how to best develop follow along services for joint customers.
4. VR is a partner in the Employment First Initiative in Florida, created by Executive Order Number 13-284 issued by Governor Scott. This order mandates the development of an Employment First Interagency Cooperative Agreement between various named agencies and organizations. It also requires each agency to develop a Strategic Action Plan designed to increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

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 customers under Title VI-B.

Average number of active cases:

Previous Year (2012): 5,331 Actual Performance (2013): 4840

Number of Individualized Plans for Employment:

Previous Year (2012): 1,602 Actual Performance (2013): 1619

Number of Employment Outcomes:

Previous Year (2012): 516 Actual Performance (2013): 520

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

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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 develop pilot projects designed to increase employment opportunities for 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 APD at all organizational levels. The Supported Employment Administrator provided trainings with the APD Employment Chief to VR/APD Staff Members to promote teamwork in providing the needed phases of Supported Employment to mutual customers.
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. They provide families and customers with the information they need to become successfully employed. The sessions were provided to the groups and organizations listed below. Additional presentations are made throughout the year by field staff to local stakeholder entities.
 - Florida Developmental Disability Council
 - Family Care Council
 - Waiver Support Coordinators
 - Florida Rehabilitation Council
 - Florida Project Search
 - Certified Business and Technical Assistance Consultant Area Training
 - Transition Committees
 - Individualized Trainings
 - Family Disability Network
 - Florida Department of Education Employees
 - Family Café
 - Visions

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- AmeriCorps
 - Florida ARC
4. VR administrators provide technical assistance and consultations on individual cases as requested by supervisors, family members, VR employees, 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 included helping develop pilot projects on a wide array of employment topics. Administrators were involved as Task Force Members, on Advisory Committees, and as Monitors of Projects. The projects complimented and supported VR's mission of helping individuals get or keep a job.
 - b. Representation on the National Disability Institute's Asset Development Advisory Committee.
 - c. Presentations on Supported Employment at conferences around the state; audiences included professionals, families, and students regarding employment options.
 - d. Participation as a Board Member for the Florida Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE).
 - e. Representation on the Statewide Employment First Initiative by VR's Supported Employment and Transition Administrators. This included helping develop the Cooperative Agreement and the Collaborative Strategic Action Implementation Plan supporting employment as mandated by the Governor's Executive Order Number 13-284.

GOAL 4: Leverage resources for extended ongoing support services

Actual Performance:

1. VR has initiated a pilot for Discovery Services to help individuals with most significant disabilities become employed. Discovery improves the quality of the placements, increases the success of the job placements and reduces the need for intense follow up supports. This service is available in four of the six VR Areas and it is anticipated the other two VR Areas will be included in the project by the end of the 2014 calendar year.
2. 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.

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3. VR and APD Administrators work together 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. Training included a focus on all of the possible extended service options.
4. VR employees participate as requested in APD hosted conference calls, as well as quarterly meetings designed to make the Supported Employment service delivery system for mutual customers an effective and efficient one.
5. The Supported Employment Administrator provides training to field staff on the multiple options available for extended services. Of particular focus has been the development of Natural and Employer Supports available on the jobsite.
6. A VR senior consultant is exploring possible strategies and options for providing services to individuals with mental health disorders and is working to develop collaborative relationships within the Mental Health system.

Explanation of Performance:

The strategies reported above helped VR continue progress in providing successful 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 17 school districts to help provide community-based work experiences to students with disabilities.
2. 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 Supported Employment 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 employees from both agencies that encourages and mandates collaboration in serving and supporting mutual customers. The trainings were provided throughout the state and follow-up webinars will be available to sustain the training.
4. The VR Supported Employment Administrator provides training to Certified Business and Technical Assistance Consultants and VR employees to

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encourage the use of Supported 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.

Barriers continue to be the lack of funding from partners for extended services. Much of the effort in the last year has been focused on addressing this and identifying alternative sources of support.

Federal Standards and Indicators

Indicator 1.1: Change in Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: Increase over prior year)
Previous Year (2012): +562 Actual Performance (2013): +735

Indicator 1.2: Percent of Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: 55.8%)
Previous Year: (2012): 45.78% Actual Performance (2013): 44.03%

Indicator 1.3: Competitive Employment Outcome (Primary) (RSA Target: 72.6%)
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Indicator 1.5: Earnings Ratio (Primary) (RSA Target: 52%)
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Indicator 1.6: Self-Support (RSA Target: 53%)
Previous Year (2012): 51.46% Actual Performance (2013): 61%

Indicator 2.1: Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (RSA Target: 80%)
Previous Year (2012): 94.49% Actual Performance (2013): 96.11%

Explanation of Performance:

Employment outcomes for VR customers mirror state economic improvements, increasing by 735 during FFY 2013 for an annual 6,792 employment outcomes. Despite the increase in employment outcomes, VR continues to experience a rehabilitation rate below target. This is due to a focused effort to close inactive cases. Although these efforts temporarily caused the rehabilitation rate to drop, VR anticipates an eventual shift in the ratio of successful closures to unsuccessful closures. This will result in an increased percentage of employment outcomes, as measured by Federal Performance Indicator 1.2.

VR is developing a vendor performance profile that will allow customers more informed choice when selecting vendors. The profile will feature vendor information related to their performance and customer base, including types of jobs gotten by customers and

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average wage and hours for jobs received. The vendor profile will allow VR customers to be better informed about what they can expect before selecting a vendor.

Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

In FFY 2012-13, with the agreement of the FRC, VR continued to use funds designated under this section to support the functions of the FRC and FILC, and to support 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. In FFY 2013, a total of 19,421 independent living plans were developed, and 35,607 independent living goals were set through the network of 16 Centers for Independent Living.

In FFY 2011, VR completed a competitive procurement and awarded four contracts to providers for Innovation and Expansion projects. The innovative services include 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, a rehabilitation engineering innovation grant one will continue into FFY 2015. The grantee is the Center for Rehabilitation Engineering and Technology at the University of South Florida. VR anticipates that services made available through the continued Innovation and Expansion contracts will contribute to greater employment opportunities for its 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 continuing Innovation and Expansion project will contribute positively to VR's rehabilitation rate and provide for more informed customer choice and options.

Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC)

The FRC works in partnership with VR to increase competitive job opportunities, enhance independence, and improve the quality of life for Floridians with disabilities. Working in strategic partnership during FFY 2014, FRC members reviewed VR's performance and met with VR employees to understand, monitor, and provide feedback on policy and procedures. The FRC discussed the quality and impact of VR services, financial participation, order of selection, and the waiting list. FRC members also met with Florida legislators and others to educate, advocate, and get feedback about VR services, budgetary requirements, and the needs of VR customers.

The FRC strategic plan follows the Florida Department of Education and VR strategic plans to provide a guide for FRC's focus and activities:

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Goal 1: To enhance VR Support and Service Systems

To meet the objective of recognizing, implementing, and expanding the use of best practices, FRC sends representatives to the Evaluation Summit each year and encourages other State Rehabilitation Councils to do the same.

The FRC Chair also participates with the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC). The FRC reviewed the NCSRC best practice recommendations for state plans and found that it was already including many of them.

This strategic goal includes monitoring customer satisfaction. During FFY 2014, FRC and VR will improve the survey process and select a new survey contractor. Each survey question will be reviewed as part of contractual requirements, set to begin in September 2014.

The FRC currently contracts with Florida State University to conduct two independent surveys. The surveys measure customer satisfaction first, at the time customers begin working on their Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE), and second, at case closure. The survey results help FRC and VR find ways to strengthen and improve delivery of services. For FFY 2013, the rate of overall satisfaction for both surveys, open and closed cases, was approximately 75 percent.

Surveys were sent to more than 12,000 people. With a 21 percent return rate, the results presented below are based on 2,523 responses.

- **Survey Item 1 - Accessibility of VR offices**

Current customers- 92% satisfaction vs. Customers with closed cases- 71% satisfaction

Recommended actions: Continue to make accessibility improvements in offices, as needed

- **Survey Item 2 - Treated with courtesy and respect**

Current customers- 96% satisfaction vs. Customers with closed cases- 85% satisfaction

Recommended actions: Continue to encourage employee self-development and training

- **Survey Item 3 - Understand needs and feelings**

Current customers- 88% satisfaction vs. Customers with closed cases- 61% satisfaction

Recommended actions: Include employee training for effective and efficient service delivery to VR customers.

- **Survey Item 4 - Appropriateness of services received**

Current customers- 91% felt appropriate vs. Customers with closed cases- 63% felt appropriate.

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Recommended actions: Evaluate the ratio of successfully closed cases and unsuccessfully closed cases to identify future employee training opportunities

- **Survey Item 5 - Other service needs but have not received**
Current customers- 67% no other service needs vs. Customers with closed cases- 46% no other service needs.
Recommended actions: Increase employee training in a variety of areas and encourage customer self-advocacy. Although, with the Codes of Federal Regulation (CFRs) and Florida Statutes VR is somewhat limited in the service options available.
- **Survey Item 6 - Informed of choices in providers and goals**
Current customers- 82% indicated informed vs. Customers with closed cases- 62% indicated informed.
Recommended actions: Encourage employee training and collaboration with community partners
- **Survey Item 6b - Able to make choices in providers and goals**
Current customers- 93% satisfaction vs. Customers with closed cases- 75% satisfaction
Recommended actions: Encourage employee training and customer self-advocacy in developing individualized employment goals
- **Survey Item 7 - Services provided promptly**
Current customers- 71% considered prompt vs. Customers with closed cases- 47% considered prompt.
Recommended actions: Improve communication by VR employees and encourage customer self-development of IPE
- **Survey Item 8 - Services made life better**
Current customers- 91% indicated services made life better vs. Customers with closed cases- 49% indicated services made life better.
Recommended actions: Monitor this area of customer response during the year to see if the staff training FRC recommended improves customer outcomes
- **Survey Item 9 - Overall satisfaction with services received from VR**
Current customers- 88% satisfied vs. Customers with closed cases- 52% satisfied.
Recommended actions: Monitor this area as the FFY 2014 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment is developed and implemented

Qualitative data from the Customer Satisfaction Survey is reviewed regularly and compiled each year. There are a few consistent comments that the FRC continues to monitor.

Goal 2: To establish and strengthen collaborative strategic partnerships

The FRC continues to work with VR to create a strong partnership. To encourage

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partnerships with outside groups, the FRC participates in the Employment First initiative with the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and other grass roots organizations and reports are presented at each quarterly meeting. It is also reaching out to the mental health council. The FRC and the Division of Blind Services Council currently work together so the interests of our shared customers can be better served.

The FRC holds public forums every quarter in different areas of the state to hear from VR customers and stakeholders. These forums are designed to gather comments on any topic, including the State Plan throughout the year. All comments and feedback provided are reviewed and are used in developing FRC comments and recommendations to VR.

To expand outreach, every effort has been made to increase the list of stakeholders receiving notice of all public forums. Outside partners are also spreading the word about the public forums. VR communications posted twitter announcements and created a Facebook event notification this year.

The FRC held five public forums during SFY 2014. Three forums were held in person in Fort Myers, Tallahassee, and Sarasota. The other two were held on a conference call. All five forums could be accessed through a telephone conference line or Communication Access Real-time Transcription (CART) services online.

Approximately 65 individuals attended the regularly scheduled forums, not including FRC and VR representatives. An additional public forum held in November to announce the change in open categories in the order of selection was attended by approximately 150 participants.

Individuals who attended the public forums included VR Ombudsmen, customers, stakeholders, parents, providers, and vendors. Other agencies that were represented included the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, FILC, Centers for Independent Living, the Department of Children and Families, the Disability Rights of Florida (client assistance program), 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 Florida legislative delegates and representatives.

FFY 2014 public forum attendees commented about on-the-job training, Business Leadership Networking, the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, the ending of transition service arrangements, information on how to file a complaint, VR support of small business development, requests for funding partner initiatives, as well as customer needs for sign language interpreters, an IPE in Spanish, and to establish a process for notification when counselors change. The FRC works with VR to track responses, and helped institute new policy based on comments and concerns brought forward.

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Goal 3: To advocate for employment of persons with disabilities

The FRC visited every state and federal legislative delegate to deliver packets that included information about VR's budgetary needs, the cost of services, return on investment, the number of individuals successfully employed, and average wages. The FRC provided a profile highlighting the positive contributions of VR's customers in the delegates' home districts, as well as their direct impact and statewide accomplishments. Other areas of advocacy with public groups and employers are included in other goals.

The FRC continues to monitor development and implementation of the statewide jobs portal with VR, the Department of Economic Opportunity, and other stakeholders. The FRC also tracks service delivery to VR transition customers. VR employees keep FRC up to date about the needs of this special population.

Goal 4: To strengthen the management of FRC internal operations

The FRC is working to be good stewards of federal and state funds, and used multiple methods to streamline advocacy efforts. This included using homework assignments to keep members informed and involved in responding to the needs of VR and its customers. The FRC conducted one quarterly meeting by conference call instead of holding a meeting in person. FRC employees are taking advantage of all training and mentoring opportunities to ensure job satisfaction and retention.

The FRC continues to focus on meeting federally mandated membership regulations. To maintain its membership, the FRC has developed a workgroup to engage and communicate with the Governor's appointment office. Discussions, correspondence, and meetings with the appointment office are ongoing and a top priority. Currently, the FRC expects several new appointments to increase the number of stakeholders represented on the council and move closer to achieving federally mandated membership requirements.

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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 supported employment-related issues that develop in the field and serves as a resource person to field staff. The coordinator also serves as advisor to administrative employees in implementing programmatic policies in accordance with federal dictates, develops effective programmatic procedures, recommends training for supported employment 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.

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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 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 customers.
- Implement the Interagency Articulation Agreement between VR and APD, as well as the cooperative agreement with the Department of Children and Families,

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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.
- 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 available services through the School to Work Program's collaboration with local school districts.
- Emphasize providing 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 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 help 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

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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.

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 employee and provider skills, and better use of existing resources.

The service approach for supported employment eligible customers uses 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 employees based on job-matching assessment information and the customer's informed choice. SE customers 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 providing 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 on 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 help with funding Phase II services.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Pam Stewart
Commissioner
Florida Department of Education
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Tallahassee, Florida 32399

RECEIVED
DIV. OF VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION
2014 OCT - 8 PM 12: 56

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 the 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) 2015 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 2015 preprint. This additional assurance was submitted under Section 1 of the preprint and is signed and dated separately by the individual authorized to execute the State Plan. In accordance with the approval of the State Plan materials, RSA is making available to Florida its FY 2015 Title I, Part B, and Title VI, Part B, grant awards.

The approved FY 2015 FDVR State Plan will be published by RSA and available to the general public on RSA's website by Wednesday, October 1, 2014. 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 2015 State Plan, please contact your state liaison, Christyne Cavataio, at (202) 245-6123 or christyne.cavataio@ed.gov.

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

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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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janet L. LaBreck". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Janet L. LaBreck
Commissioner

cc: Aleisa McKinlay
Christyne Cavataio

Aleisa McKinlay
VR Director
Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Florida Department of Education
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