

Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

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Why VR Programs do a CSNA

- Required every three years by Section 412 of the Rehabilitation Act as amended in Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and in 34 CFR 361.29.
- The CSNA informs the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan
- Identifies the needs of individuals with disabilities in the State

What are the Areas Assessed?

- The overall performance of DVR as it relates to meeting the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in the State;
- The rehabilitation needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- The rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities who are minorities, and those who may have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
- The rehabilitation needs of youth and students with disabilities in transition, including their need for pre-employment transition services;
- The rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce development system;
- The need to establish, develop and/or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and
- The needs of businesses in recruiting, hiring, accommodating and retaining individuals with disabilities.

How was the CSNA Conducted?

- Analysis of National, State and agency-specific data
- Surveys of four groups:
 - Individuals with disabilities and/or their families or care providers
 - Community partners that serve individuals with disabilities in some form
 - VR staff
 - Businesses
- Individual and focus group interviews with four groups:
 - Individuals with disabilities and/or their families or care providers
 - Community partners that serve individuals with disabilities in some form
 - VR staff
 - Businesses

Research Totals

Data Collection Totals by Type and Group for 201819 Florida VR CSNA					
Research Method	Research Group and Count				
	Consumer	Partner	Staff	Business	Total
Electronic Survey	1,777	129	290	26	2,222
Individual Interview	4	10	31	4	49
Focus Group					
Number of groups	13	10	13	0	36
Number of participants	72	47	94	0	213
Total participants	1,853	186	415	30	2,484

Sec. 1: Overall Agency Performance

- There are Areas with a variety of similarities and differences related to the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities.
- This is the first CSNA conducted since the full implementation of the common performance measures in WIOA, so as much as possible, the project team tried to include information on these measures
- *Overall Themes:*
- *VR staff are characterized as committed and caring individuals that strive to do their best for consumers.*
- *The high turnover of staff has been a challenge for the organization in multiple areas and is related to the pay scale for staff.*
- *There is a lack of community awareness about VR and a need to increase communication about VR to the public.*

General Statistics

Item	ALL CONSUMERS			
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Applications	25,575	24,273	25,299	24,662
Avg. time for eligibility determination	65	65	58	47
Percent closed prior to IPE development	29.4%	53.5%	53.9%	40.0%
Ave. time from eligibility to plan (days)	77.0	79.6	73.9	69.7
Number of consumers in training by type				
Vocational	1,808	1,366	1,324	1,269
Percent of total in training	30.7%	25.4%	22.4%	20.3%
Undergraduate	4,061	3,999	4,572	4,965
Percent of total in training	69.0%	74.4%	77.3%	79.4%
Graduate	18	11	21	22
Percent of total in training	0.3%	0.2%	0.4%	0.4%
Rehabilitation Rate (Excludes cases that closed before 'In Service' status.)	29.9%	37.3%	40.8%	37.4%
Median earnings of those closed as successfully rehabilitated	\$14,052	\$13,832	\$13,576	\$14,028
Total number of cases served	25,575	24,273	25,299	24,662

Expenditure Categories

Major Expense Category	2014	2015	2016	2017
Assessment	\$4,096,413.25	\$5,933,096.42	\$7,463,990.00	\$7,323,482.50
Percent of Total	3.9%	6.2%	6.5%	6.0%
Diagnosis and Treatment of Impairments	\$41,821,841.00	\$37,786,429.58	\$44,414,807.46	\$44,870,107.27
Percent of Total	39.4%	39.6%	38.4%	36.5%
Training	\$19,402,530.26	\$16,690,472.09	\$19,853,675.86	\$22,871,299.13
Percent of Total	18.3%	17.5%	17.2%	18.6%
Employment Services	\$19,454,861.00	\$15,201,944.00	\$17,945,492.00	\$19,431,292.00
Percent of Total	18.3%	15.9%	15.5%	15.8%
Supported Employment	\$5,128,362.00	\$5,947,964.00	\$6,796,016.00	\$7,353,228.00
Percent of Total	4.8%	6.2%	5.9%	6.0%
Assistive/Rehab Technology	\$6,070,486.45	\$5,832,414.11	\$10,928,321.74	\$11,830,940.10
Percent of Total	5.7%	6.1%	9.5%	9.6%

Recommendations

- VR is encouraged to examine potential ways to increase the salary for their staff.
- VR should consider conducting a training needs analysis of field staff to address competency gaps
- VR should identify ways to streamline processes in order to help people get through the application and eligibility process sooner, as well as reducing time in developing their IPE
- VR is encouraged to continue efforts in seeking a new case management system that can eliminate the multiple and complicated systems that must be used currently
- VR should consider increasing efforts to enhance public awareness of the agency and its mission through a formalized marketing campaign

Sec. 2: Needs of Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities, Including their need for Supported Employment

- *Transportation remains the most significant need of consumers served by VR, and this is especially true in rural areas*
- *The most frequently cited vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities included all types of training, work skills, increased education, work experience and social skills development.*
- *Employer misconceptions about the ability of individuals with disabilities is a significant barrier to employment and becomes more significant with the increase in the significance of the disability.*
- *There is an ever-increasing percentage of individuals being served by VR that have significant mental health impairments. VR staff and service providers need training to ensure they are aware of how to best serve this population.*
- *There is a reduction in the number of individuals working in subminimum wage employment in Florida, and VR and their network of providers needs to be sure that they have the capacity to serve these individuals through furthering developing their capacity to provide supported and customized employment.*
- *Self-advocacy training for individuals with disabilities is an essential rehabilitation need.*

Supported Employment

Item	SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT			
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Applications	2,591	2,980	3,351	3,760
Percent of all applications	10.1%	12.3%	13.2%	15.2%
Plans developed	966	3,211	2,757	3,386
Avg. time from eligibility to plan (days) (Excludes days on Waiting List)	78.4	77.7	76.5	70.4
Number of cases closed rehabilitated	722	732	940	931
Median earnings of those closed as successfully rehabilitated	\$8,224	\$7,568	\$8,608	\$7,924
Rehabilitation Rate	26.1%	37.6%	41.4%	36.7%

Section 511 Impact

- In January of 2016, there were 82 organizations that held a valid 14c certificate in Florida. These 82 organizations employed 6,332 individuals with disabilities at less than minimum wage in January, 2016. In the two-and-a-half-year period from January 2016 through July 2018, thirty 14c holders let their certificate expire and did not renew. In addition, there was a reduction of 2,818 individuals with disabilities working in subminimum wage in Florida.
- Reasons for reduction cited:
 - Burdensome paperwork demands of Section 511
 - Morally wrong
 - What happened to the individuals working in subminimum wage?
 - Making minimum wage but working less hours
 - In day programs
 - Unsure

Recommendations

- VR needs to be able to track the number of individuals that apply for services from subminimum wage environments after receiving career counseling, and information and referral services (CC&I&R) arranged for by VR.
- Consider implementing an inter-disciplinary team approach for SE cases. This will ensure that there is collaboration between agencies and families/care providers, which will contribute to informed choice for the consumer and person-centered planning
- VR should provide training to staff and partners on the various options available to individuals with disabilities that need to identify and develop extended service providers for supported employment services other than APD
- Provide training for staff and providers on strategies that contribute to the pursuit of work above the level of SGA, including self-sufficiency
- VR should continue putting efforts and funding into CE training and development to increase the number of individuals who could benefit in terms of an employment outcome and the number of qualified providers willing to offer customized employment services
- Provide training to staff and providers on effectively working with individuals with mental health impairments and those in recovery

Sec. 3: Needs of Individuals with Disabilities from Different Ethnic Groups, Including Needs of Individuals who may have been Unserved or Underserved by the VR Program

- *Individuals with disabilities living in the rural areas of Florida were the most frequently mentioned underserved group. The lack of public transportation and the distance that has to be travelled to get to the VR offices or to work was the primary reason noted for being underserved*
- *The need for work skills, education, training and rehabilitation professionals that speak their language were the most frequently noted needs of individuals from diverse cultures.*
- *Deaf individuals were characterized as potentially underserved because there is a shortage of qualified interpreters in many parts of the State.*

Recommendations

- VR should maximize the use of distance technologies to reach individuals in rural areas. Utilization of Skype or other videoconferencing technologies can save travel costs and contribute to accessing services for those who feel disconnected or do not know about VR services
- VR is encouraged to establish a work group of staff and partners that work frequently with consumers that are African-American to identify ways to increase the rate of these individuals accessing postsecondary education training opportunities
- Partner with APD staff to conduct a series of trainings on how to effectively work with individuals on the Autism Spectrum, and offer the training for staff from each organization, as well as service providers that work with this population
- Recruit and hire bilingual staff, including those that are fluent in sign language


Sec. 4: Needs of Youth with Disabilities in Transition

- *All of the five required pre-employment transition services represent significant rehabilitation needs of students with disabilities in Florida, with work-based learning experiences being the most significant and important need.*
- *Transportation is a major barrier for students and their ability to experience work*
- *The primary rehabilitation needs of youth with disabilities in Florida are work skills, soft skills, education, training and transportation.*
- *Youth with disabilities in Florida need to develop the ability to advocate for themselves to ensure they have access to the same opportunities as their peers without disabilities.*

Transition

Item	TRANSITION			
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Applications	8,947	9,996	11,034	11,141
Percent of all applications	35.0%	41.2%	43.6%	45.2%
Avg. time for eligibility determination	66	69	61	50
Plans developed	2,098	6,265	7,692	7,843
Avg. time from eligibility to plan (days) (Excludes days on Waiting List)	91.5	87.0	78.9	75.0
Number of consumers in training by type				
Vocational	857	705	758	793
Percent of all ages in Vocational Training				45.0%
Undergraduate	3,130	3,201	3,754	4,194
Percent of all ages in Undergraduate Training				62.6%
Graduate	7	4	14	11
Number of cases closed rehabilitated	2,358	1,931	2,104	2,008
Median earnings of those closed as sucessfully rehabilitated	\$12,136	\$13,092	\$12,484	\$11,468
Rehabilitation Rate	26.1%	36.8%	40.7%	32.4%

Recommendations

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- VR should develop a program in partnership with secondary and postsecondary schools throughout Florida that ensures that students with disabilities that will be pursuing postsecondary education get connected to the Disabled Student Services programs at the colleges prior to the first day of college classes
 - VR should recruit pre-employment transition services providers that will provide training in self-advocacy to help address the apparent shortage of these services. In addition, VR should consider partnering with the Centers for Independent Living in Florida as a way to address this service gap
 - VR is encouraged to consult with the Youth Technical Assistance Center (Y-TAC) to develop an intensive technical assistance agreement aimed at improving services to Juvenile Justice and Foster Care Youth
 - VR should work with schools to identify and refer students receiving services under a 504 plan and encourage schools to refer these students to VR earlier than their senior year
 - VR should actively recruit pre-employment transition services providers that can communicate using sign language and that have experience working with deaf individuals. In addition, VR should identify peer mentors for the youth with deafness that will help them develop self-advocacy skills and help them develop high expectations
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Sect. 5: Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Served through other Components of the Statewide Workforce Development System

- *The relationship of the CareerSource Centers with VR remains one primarily of referral rather than co-enrollment and braiding of funding.*
- *The CareerSource Centers were characterized as being ineffective in their service to individuals with disabilities in Florida, though there are areas that do better than others.*
- *Ongoing consistent cross-training between the core partners is a need so that staff are aware of how each other's programs function and what limitations in service exist.*
- *CareerSource Center staff need to receive ongoing training on how to effectively work with individuals with disabilities, especially those with mental health impairments.*

Recommendations

- Provide cross-training with VR and CareerSource staff to increase understanding of each agency's role, responsibilities and services for participants (including those for participants with the most significant disabilities)
- VR should identify examples of effective partnerships with the CareerSource Centers across the State and use these as examples for training and replication in other areas
- VR should pilot the use of Partnership Plus in a few CareerSource Centers across the State to help ensure that they are positively addressing the Ticket assignment issues in some Areas of the State
- Given the fact that Apprenticeships are a focus of the CareerSource Centers, VR should partner with select Centers to ensure that individuals with disabilities are included in Apprenticeship programs. These programs hold tremendous potential for youth with disabilities, and can be a source for partnership development between VR and the Title I Youth program across the State.
- VR and their Workforce partners need to develop a method for tracking co-enrollment of consumers and share that information on a regular basis among programs.
- Strengthen the partnership between the Business Relations Representatives (BRR) and the local CareerSource to increase shared employer relationships, job matches with CareerSource and VR participants and increase both agencies ability to meet employer needs in Florida.

Sec. 6: Need to Establish, Develop or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs in Florida

- *The need to develop service providers is greatest in the rural areas, especially providers for supported and customized employment.*
- *There is a need for service providers that are skilled in working with individuals with mental health impairments and other most significant disabilities.*
- *There is a need to develop providers that can sign and have experience working with Deaf individuals.*

Recommendations

- VR should include CRP staff in training provided for their counseling staff whenever possible
- VR is encouraged to restructure rate payments to CRPs that reward high level and specific skills type employment (not just minimum wage jobs), and bilingual capacity (including sign language)
- Identify regions with few CRPs relative to the client population and prioritize CRP development in those regions
- Provide training and reinforce the outcome expectations of WIOA for CRPs so they are functioning under current guidance. This may cause amendments to the current benchmark fee schedule
- VR needs to do a review of the psychological evaluation reports purchased by the organization to ensure that the results of the evaluation are unique to the individual referred

Sec. 7: Needs of Business and Effectiveness in Serving Employers

- *The most frequent feedback received from participants across all groups regarding employers was the need to educate them and reduce the biases held about the abilities of individuals with disabilities. Employers were frequently characterized as fearful about hiring individuals with disabilities and about their capacity to perform the essential functions of many jobs.*
- *In order to improve their effectiveness in serving employers, VR will need to increase the number of their Business Relations Representatives*
- *There is an opportunity for BRRs to expand the partnership with their Title I counterparts to increase the number of employers they can reach. While this partnership was active in some Areas, it was not consistent.*

Recommendations

- There is an opportunity for BRRs to expand the partnership with their Title I counterparts to increase the number of employers they can reach. While this partnership was active in some Areas, it was not consistent.
- VR is encouraged to provide trainings for employers on disability awareness. This will serve the dual purpose of educating employers and increasing awareness of VR as a resource for employers.
- As resources allow, VR should increase the number of BRRs throughout the State and ensure the BRR position is permanent in order to increase its potential effectiveness. This position has the ability to greatly impact VR Works and employment outcomes for VR.
- Although there were a limited number of employers interviewed for this study, the ones that did participate indicated that they would like to have a long-term relationship with VR and not be simply a source of job referral

Questions?
