# State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program

# Maine Department of Labor - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan for Fiscal Year 2015 (submitted FY 2014)

## Preprint - Section 1: State Certifications

1.1 The **Department of Labor** is authorized to submit this State Plan under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended [[1](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "ftn.id0101)] and its supplement under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act [[2](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "ftn.id0102)].

1.2 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, the **Department of Labor** [[3](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "ftn.id0103)] agrees to operate and administer the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program in accordance with the provisions of this State Plan [[4](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "ftn.id0104)], the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations [[5](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "ftn.id0105)], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and the administration of the State Plan for the vocational rehabilitation services program.

1.3 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated state agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the provisions of the supplement to this State Plan [[6](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "ftn.id0106)], the Rehabilitation Act and all applicable regulations [[7](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "ftn.id0107)], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the Title I State Plan. Yes

1.4 The designated state agency and/or the designated state unit has the authority under state law to perform the functions of the state regarding this State Plan and its supplement. Yes

1.5 The state legally may carry out each provision of the State Plan and its supplement. Yes

1.6 All provisions of the State Plan and its supplement are consistent with state law. Yes

1.7 The (enter title of state officer below) Yes

Commissioner

... has the authority under state law to receive, hold and disburse federal funds made available under this State Plan and its supplement.

1.8 The (enter title of state officer below)...Yes

Commissioner

... has the authority to submit this State Plan for vocational rehabilitation services and the State Plan supplement for supported employment services.

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

**State Plan Certified By**

As the authorized signatory identified above, I hereby certify that I will sign, date and retain in the files of the designated state agency/designated state unit Section 1 of the Preprint, and separate Certification of Lobbying forms (Form ED-80-0013; available at <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/ed80-013.pdf>) for both the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

**Signed?** Yes

**Name of Signatory:** Jeanne Paquette

**Title of Signatory:** Commissioner, Maine Department of Labor

**Date Signed:**

**Assurances Certified By**

At the request of RSA, the designated state agency and/or the designated state unit provide the following assurance(s), in addition to those contained within Section 2 through 8 below, in connection with the approval of the State Plan for FY 2014: Yes

Comments:

**Signed?** Yes

**Name of Signatory:** Jeanne Paquette

**Title of Signatory:** Commissioner, Maine Department of Labor

**Date Signed**\* The signatory of the assurance with the authority to execute and submit the State Plan will maintain a signed copy of the assurance(s) with the signed State Plan.

Section 1 Footnotes

[[1](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "id0101)] Public Law 93 112, as amended by Public Laws 93 516, 95 602, 98 221, 99 506, 100-630, 102-569, 103-073, and 105-220.

[[2](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "id0102)] Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

[[3](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "id0103)] All references in this plan to "designated state agency" or to "the state agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[[4](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "id0104)] No funds under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved State Plan in accordance with Section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR part 361.

[[5](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "id0105)] Applicable regulations include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85 and 86 and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program regulations in 34 CFR Part 361.

[[6](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "id0106)] No funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the Title I State Plan in accordance with Section 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[[7](http://rsa.ed.gov/includes/export-html.cfm?filename=sp-samemitchellm.html&exportto=print&utf16=1" \l "id0107)] Applicable regulations include the EDGAR citations in footnote 5, 34 CFR Part 361, and 34 CFR Part 363.

## Attachment 4.2(c) Input of State Rehabilitation Council

Required annually by all agencies except those agencies that are independent consumer-controlled commissions.

Identify the Input provided by the state rehabilitation council, including recommendations from the council's annual report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other council reports. Be sure to also include:

* the Designated state unit's response to the input and recommendations; and
* explanations for the designated state unit's rejection of any input or recommendation of the council.

**Attachment 4.2(c) Input of State Rehabilitation Council**

**Summary of Input from the Public**

1. Employment of persons who are disabled is not logically possible as a first until the disabled person is prepared to integrate into day to day life which the mainstream takes for granted. Innovation & expansion funding goals found in the “Rehab Act” spell this out. It is not logical to under prepare folks who are disabled to live life to its fullest if under preparation is allowed to continue as it has due to gross under funding of Independent living for more than a decade.

**DVR RESPONSE – DVR appreciates these concerns. This year DVR committed I & E funds to help support the hiring of an executive director for the State Independent Living Council. This individual will assist in identifying needs and resources related to independent living for Maine people with disabilities.**

2. I'm writing today to encourage Maine's DVR System to use some of the Innovation & Expansion funds available to them, to research and fund transportation projects that will allow more Mainers with disabilities without reliable transportation options, to access and keep gainful employment. I can truly empathize with the fact that there are varying pressing needs that need to be addressed with only so much funding to go around.  I'm sure it's overwhelming.  However, undertaking a project such as this could begin to address a systemic, serious problem that has plagued people with disabilities, forever.    The fact that the economic self-sufficiency of people with disabilities would improve as well as impacting the economy positively is something that we should all want, personally and professionally.

**DVR RESPONSE – Access to reliable transportation is a concern shared by many agencies that assist individuals with disabilities. The Employment First Maine Coalition (of which DVR is a lead member) is examining the transportation issues that impact access to employment. At this time, DVR has no other planned transportation initiatives.**

3. I am a visually impaired consumer. The EFM, as I understand it, is a policy that seeks to address the extremely low rate of employment of people with disabilities. It helps to direct funds toward employment services as its first and preferred option. All people with disabilities have a right to the opportunities for integrated community-based employment and/or customized employment. However, the Act does not require employers to give preference for these jobs to people with disabilities. Part of DVR State Plan includes identifying strategies that contribute to the attainment of goals in a client’s plan. It also addresses describing factors that may impede attainment of these goals. But DVR’s State Plan does not address fundamental areas that are barriers to employment. These barriers are:

* Accessible, affordable, stable housing.
* Independent living skills.
* Adjustment counseling for those newly disabled.
* It is likely that people with disabilities will require assistive technology/devices. They will need training in order to use said technology/devices.
* The last barrier to employment I will list is transportation.

Without these fundamental basics, a person with disabilities will not be able to sustain employment and therefore may result in an unsuccessful closure, or a drop-out. I understand that RSA has specific guidelines on how the State Plan is written so barriers to employment (as stated above) may not be able to be discussed in the report. I ask that DVR take these barriers into account when working with a client. We all want clients to have successful closures.

**DVR RESPONSE: DVR appreciates these concerns. As VR Counselors develop employment plans with their clients, they examine barriers to employment and construct appropriate plans – keeping those needs in mind.**

**SUMMARY OF COMMENTS BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL**

**SRC COMMENT:**

Attachment 4.8(b)(1)Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment System Federal, State & Local Agencies & Programs; DVR has done an excellent job of identifying key agencies and programs with whom coordination and cooperation is crucial in order to support employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities throughout the state. Significant effort has been dedicated to developing strategies to coordinate with MDOE in order to serve transition-age youth, which is commendable. Of additional importance are continued efforts by BRS to develop an MOU with the Maine Department of Corrections. Individuals with disabilities are disproportionally represented in prison populations and face additional barriers to employment upon their release. The dedication of a regional DVR staff liaison to correctional agencies is an important step in strengthening services targeted at this population.

**DVR RESPONSE: DVR strives to maximize collaboration where possible and appreciates the SRC’s recognition of these efforts. DVR recognizes the importance of partnerships with the correctional system and has developed two procedural directives to outline how DVR will conduct outreach and accept referrals on individuals who are involved with the correctional system. DVR’s commitment to strengthening services to this population is evidenced by the recent Statewide Training Event for all staff and partners (including a number of representatives from the Maine Department of Corrections) which featured national experts Randy Loss -Pennsylvania VR and Gordon Swensen -Utah VR. Maine Department of Corrections representatives meet quarterly with representatives from DVR and additional upcoming joint training activities are planned.**

**SRC COMMENT**: Memorandum of Understanding with SCD (Operator of Maine’s two Job Corps Centers); The State Rehabilitation Council respectfully requests a copy of this finalized MOU as we have not yet reviewed it.

**DVR RESPONSE: DVR will ensure that the SRC receives a copy of this MOU at their next meeting.**

**SRC COMMENT**:

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

The Department of Education and Vocational Rehabilitation continue to work collaboratively for the benefit of young adults transitioning from secondary education.

**DVR RESPONSE**: DVR appreciates the SRC’s recognition of its efforts to collaborate with the Maine Department of Education to support transition-age students and young adults.

**SRC COMMENT:**

Attachment 4.8(b)(4) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services Employment Specialist Workforce Development System Updates; How was Syntiro chosen to provide this training for employment specialists (please describe the process)? How is Syntiro compensated for its services (please list funding sources)?

**DVR RESPONSE: Syntiro was selected through the State of Maine’s Request for Proposals process in 2011.  They are funded through a contract with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) based upon specific deliverables identified in Service Specifications and Performance Guidelines. DHHS funds training activities and workforce development system administration.  The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired fund stipends for the mentoring component of the system.  State and federal funds are the sources of funds.**

**SRC COMMENT:**

Business Relations Update; DVR has done an amazing job over the past year in increasing relations with the business community through its successful relationships with employers that have resulted in additional employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Given the limited staffing resources we had this year it is impressive we were able to accomplish so much.

**DVR RESPONSE: DVR is very pleased with the response of businesses to DVR’s outreach. As noted in this plan, DVR experienced a turnover of Business Relations staff that limited the agency’s ability temporarily to explore additional partnerships. While not yet completely fully-staffed, business relations efforts are active again with the expansion of Disability Mentoring Day events.**

**SRC COMMENT:**

Maine APSE; While it is great that Maine APSE and DVR are collaborating to provide a statewide training conference, the SRC recommends that DVR evaluate its policies and procedures concerning the DVR Director or other DVR employees sitting on the APSE board and consider if conflicts of interest may be perceived by other organizations who have not been invited to co-sponsor statewide events.

**DVR RESPONSE: DVR appreciates the SRC’s concerns. DVR staff who sit on any boards or committees do so in keeping with state and agency policies. DVR regularly collaborates with many agencies and organizations to co-sponsor training and events. These collaborations typically do not involve funding. DVR does not believe a conflict of interest existed in the matter above.**

**SRC COMMENT:**

Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Data System on Personnel & Personnel Development; “The system for collecting and analyzing data indicates approximately 10,000 individuals with disabilities will be served by Vocational Rehabilitation in FFY 2014. Current service delivery is performed by Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) staff, consisting of 65 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, 8 Paraprofessionals, 9 Casework Supervisors, and 3 Regional Managers. DVR staff receives administrative and organizational support and guidance from the Director of DVR, the Director of SIQA (Systems Improvement and Quality Assurance), the Director of the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened, DVR Assistant Director, and six Rehabilitation Consultants (program specialists) and clerical/secretarial support services from 23 office personnel. DVR has an additional five time-limited Rehabilitation Counselor I’s . Data gathered during the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant when DVR also had temporary RCI’s demonstrated that DVR’s ability to efficiently meet the needs of clients was significantly improved when these positions were available.” The SRC suggests that DVR provide the data referenced above regarding how hiring temporary positions improves outcomes.

**DVR RESPONSE: DVR has been able to make the five Rehabilitation Counselor I positions permanent as a result of data that originated from the successful effort to eliminate the waitlist for DVR services. Rehabilitation Counselor I positions conduct intakes and provide follow up with clients, providers, and others - thus allowing the Rehabilitation Counselor II to spend more time engaged in vocational counseling and related professional duties. DVR has been able to successfully close 65 % more individuals in employment since the elimination of the waitlist and addition of these important staff members.**

**SRC COMMENT:**

Plan For Recruitment, Preparation And Retention Of Qualified Personnel; Given that supervisory experience is not a requirement for the CWS positions, are current VRC’s applying for these positions and not being selected or are they not applying? Has there been progress towards creating a Rehabilitation Counselor III position? When does BRS plan to rehire for the vacant position of Business Relation Specialists? Are there measurable outcomes associated with these positions? The SRC recommends that DVR develop a plan to reduce staff turnover. While retirement is inevitable, individuals who leave for other reasons such as low pay may be retained with other incentives (i.e. positive workplace conditions, sense that employee is appreciate and needed, etc.)

**DVR RESPONSE: After a period of stable supervision in the field offices, DVR has experienced a number of vacancies over the last year due to retirement or promotion. With the exception of one office where the majority of counseling staff are relatively recent hires, all other offices have been able to successfully recruit well qualified supervisory candidates. Individuals hired have come from both within the agency and from other state agencies. DVR continues to pursue development of a career ladder through the addition of Rehabilitation Counselor III positions. At the time of this plan, one time-limited Business Relations Specialist was vacant. The agency is looking at creative ways to fill this position and is seeking interested individuals from both the rehabilitation and business communities. Outcome measures for business relations work include number of job placements, rates of pay, number of successful VR case closures and VR case costs. DVR is very concerned about succession planning and recruitment of qualified staff. After a number of years, the state freeze on merit and longevity pay has been lifted during the past year and cost of living increases have been offered. DVR is exploring additional ways to recruit qualified candidates including through the expanded use of internship possibilities. At the local and state level DVR is attentive to making the agency a rewarding place to work.**

**SRC COMMENT:**

Staff Development; The SRC commends DVR for their commitment to staff development and offering a variety of training opportunities to staff in multiple formats. Has attending trainings specific to working with individuals with Acquired Brain Injury led to improved employment outcomes for this population?

**DVR RESPONSE: DVR does not have data at this time that ties improvement in employment outcomes to staff training, however this issue will be considered as DVR embarks on its next Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. In the last four years DVR closed 1278 individuals with TBI listed as the cause of their impairment.  300 of whom were successfully closed in employment.**

**SRC COMMENT:**

4.11(a) Statewide Assessment Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment 2013 – 2015

Executive Summary; The Statewide Needs Assessment represents a broad and thoughtful summary of rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities throughout the state. The Assessment has also successfully identified key populations where further development of services is necessary. In pursuit of this goal, we are very proud that DVR continues to maintain access to services without the need for a waitlist. The Executive Summary notes that spending on College or University Training and Occupational/Vocational Training has seen large decreases in recent years. However, this is in addition to the fact that one-third of VR clients are now students transitioning to adulthood, and there is further high demand for vocational rehabilitation services among current Special Education students. Education and Training Services represent a particularly essential and important tool for individuals preparing to enter the workforce for the first time, as well as those who seek to re-enter with updated skills. Is this expenditure trend expected to continue, reverse, or maintain in light of DVR’s continued emphasis on working collaboratively with MDOE toward serving this age group? The Executive Summary also noted increasing numbers of individuals identified with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Maine, particularly along Maine’s Mid-Coast region. This increase corresponds with CRP requests for disability-specific training on Autism, as noted later in the Summary. I would encourage DVR to move to address this crucial training need among their CRPs in order to promote the delivery of effective services and to achieve the goals and priorities outlined in later sections. The Report notes there are 3 clubhouses; there are currently 5 clubhouses in Maine.  Visit following website to confirm:  <http://iccd.org/clubhouseDirectory.php?state=Maine> . Additionally, “In 2012, three more clubhouses have opened across the state to add to the two that were already here in Maine. DVR works closely with those club houses, and is in the process of developing a procedural directive so that clubhouse and VR staff will have clear direction on best practices and guidance regarding services that each entity will provide. This draft will be finalized in May, 2013, and presented at a joint meeting of clubhouse members and staff and VR staff in June, 2013.” What was outcome of this draft procedural directive? The summary briefly talks about TANF. Has VR establish an MOU with DHHS and MMC Voc Svcs regarding vocational assessments?  Finally, “Surveys of VR counselors and CRP’s did note the negative impact of high VR caseloads…” How is this concern being addressed? Is their data linking higher successful closure rates with lower caseloads or vice versa?

**DVR RESPONSE: This executive summary reflects the status of data and programs at the time it was written. DVR is currently in the early stages of its next triennial comprehensive statewide needs assessment. DVR is very pleased that it continues to be able to serve individuals in all priority categories and is appreciative of the SRC’s recognition of this achievement.**

**DVR is currently wrapping up a post-secondary services workgroup that has re-examined rules, guidance and practice related to DVR’s provision of post-secondary education. DVR serves many individuals who require post-secondary education to meet their employment goals; however DVR is not anticipating a significant change in overall spending on this service based on the agency’s use of statewide policies that ensure that comparable benefits are leveraged to allow for the most judicious use of VR funds.**

**Over the last three years DVR has considerably increased the number of joint training opportunities open to community rehabilitation providers. The increase in identification of individuals with an Autism diagnosis has prompted DVR to offer additional training for staff and providers as well as to develop new tools to support services to this population. One of those tools is the new Bridge – Pathways to Employment Career Exploration Workshop (CEW) curriculum. This version of the CEW is appropriate for use with individuals with low literacy, intellectual disabilities and Autism and is being piloted in schools and partner agencies as well as by DVR. Another new initiative is the Discovering Personal Genius approach to customized employment. This approach will be supported in part by expansion of Medicaid waiver services and will allow for more valuable pre-vocational discovery activities to assist individuals with significant intellectual disabilities – including those with Autism.**

**As mentioned above, this Executive Summary reflects the number of Clubhouses in operation at the time of the needs assessment. Through a series of meetings and joint work, DVR established a procedural directive that has been effective in building strong relationships between DVR and the Clubhouses across the state.**

**DVR has not established an MOU with DHHS and MMC-DVR regarding vocational assessments for TANF recipients.  The ASPIRE employment pathway and VR rehabilitation process provide sufficient structure; ongoing multi-level cross-departmental communication ensures that individuals are jointly served well and resources maximized.**

**Among the data DVR monitors each month are the numbers of new applications, open cases and successful closures. The DVR Director meets with regional managers and other leaders to review the data and make any needed adjustments in staffing, budgets and to identify any emerging trends.**

**SRC COMMENT:**

Attachment 4.11(b) Annual Estimates

Identify the Cost of Services For Each Priority Category; The numbers in this section are not adding up given issues and concerns outlined with staff turnover, number of days to enter into a plan, high caseloads size and number of clients lost between eligibility and plan development. DVR estimates that they will serve an additional 1,000 people in FY2015 with the same budget of $8,400,00.00. These numbers translate to an average caseload size of 153 clients per VRCII, and a cost per case reduction of approximately $100. In FY2013, the average caseload size would have been 138; feedback noted in this Plan indicates a negative impact of high caseload size. At what point will DVR determine that they have reached their human resource capacity?

**DVR RESPONSE: Projections in this section are best estimates based on data to date. As clients enter and exit VR services across fiscal years and have individualized plans for employment, numbers of individuals served may represent a mix of new applicants as well as previously opened cases. Additionally, case size differs across the state based on regional demographics. At this time, DVR believes that it can meet the needs of projected clients with the level of funding currently available.**

**SRC COMMENT:**

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

The Maine SRC would like to formally request that Maine DVR embrace necessary procedures to ensure that the SRC be intricately involved in the process of developing the state plan in future years. Despite annual planning to ensure involvement, the SRC continues to be on the periphery of the process, providing comments after the fact. Additionally, the Maine SRC would like to request that Maine DVR review its procedures regarding seeking input from individuals with disabilities through public forums. The only public forum hosted by DVR to gather input from individuals with disabilities in regards to its state plan was held at the central office in Augusta, and no one attended the comment or submitted comments on the state plan.

The SRC supports the four state goals and priorities listed under this section. In particular, DVR’s goal of increasing the number of successful case closures for FY 15 reflects continued high achievement in obtaining employment outcomes for clients. However, we would also encourage a continued emphasis on the quality of individual employment outcomes in addition to the number. We also support the goal of increasing the number of successful case closures for FY 15 by pursuing reductions in “drop out” numbers through collection and analysis of data on these cases. In light of the additional objective to embrace and implement an “Employment First” philosophy, DVR might also benefit from collecting and analyzing data on other unsuccessful closure categories as well, including individuals who are determined unable to benefit from services after a plan has been developed. Analysis of these closures may offer valuable information in terms of understanding current trends and challenges faced in serving individuals with the most significant disabilities, and what additional services or policies from DVR (or other agencies and programs) might be necessary to support employment outcomes in these cases. The SRC proposes adding an objective to collect and analyze data on individuals closed under this determination. Finally, the SRC appreciates the opportunity to be an active participant in the Employment First Maine Coalition.

**DVR RESPONSE: The SRC is highly valued as a member of the Employment First Coalition. DVR welcomes increased involvement by the SRC in developing both the state plan and additional public forum opportunities. Staff shortages last year left DVR unable to implement a new strategy of quarterly review of progress on state plan goals with the SRC; however this will occur this year. DVR appreciates the SRC’s recognition of its increasing number of successful employment closures and shares the SRC’s commitment to quality employment opportunities. DVR regularly captures “success stories” from the field that demonstrate the broad range of jobs that clients obtain. The use of the Career Exploration Workshop as a tool early in the VR process has promoted more thoughtful development of individual employment goals.**

**DVR shares the SRC’s concerns about clients who prematurely exit the VR system. The DVR Director has conducted initial research designed to better understand the demographics and factors associated with individuals who exit early. This research will continue to be developed during the upcoming year and will also involve examination of effective strategies from other state VR programs. A representative from the SRC will be invited to join a work group that is being formed to further address this concern in the fall of 2014.**

**SRC COMMENT:**

8. Attachment 4.11(d) State’s Strategies

* Goal 1 strategy a); What has this data revealed thus far? What is the breakdown of OOS category in the drop- out rates? It is very alarming that this number has increased to 1,580. The SRC recommends aggressive action is taken to thoroughly examine and rectify this. The SRC is willing to provide assistance in examining this concern in greater detail.

**DVR RESPONSE: As mentioned above, DVR shares the SRC’s concerns about drop-out rates and is conducting research currently to better address the issue. Recent breakout of early exiters by Order of Selection priority is below:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Closed after eligibility, before IPE** | **Total Of Case Status** | **OOS 1** | **OOS 2** | **OOS 3** |
| 2010 | 1973 | 1802 | 157 | 14 |
| 2011 | 1735 | 1366 | 297 | 72 |
| 2012 | 1177 | 707 | 356 | 114 |
| 2013 | 1580 | 749 | 714 | 117 |

**SRC COMMENT:**

Goal 2 strategy a); Is the CEW reducing total case length or time to enter into plan? Given that the average days to plan are 299, far exceeding the 180 days referenced in the Rehab. Act, and relatively the same since FY 2011, what is the impact the CEW is having on days to plan? Has DVR considered conducting a time study to examine VR counselor time devoted to working with eligible consumers to get them into plans to meet career goals?

**DVR RESPONSE: The Career Exploration Workshop (CEW) is showing significant impact in a number of categories. Importantly, the rehab rate for individuals who participate in CEW is considerably higher than for individuals who do not. The CEW is also showing some promising signs as to the impact on earnings. Raw data from DVR’s yet to be completed customer satisfaction survey revealed that 87% of clients who participated in CEW found it “somewhat helpful” or “very helpful”**

**SRC COMMENT:**

Goal 3 objective d); Data collection and goal establishment will be crucial to achieving the objective of serving individuals who are New Mainers, among other groups. Targeting this community will be an important strategy to reach minority and underserved populations, and New Mainers in particular demonstrate a need for specific outreach strategies to help address language and cultural barriers. These barriers persist even when transition-age youth of New Mainers demonstrate English proficiency, as parents struggle to understand the services available or to support the process of obtaining them. To that end, has DVR considered developing outreach and orientation videos in commonly encountered foreign languages, in addition to promoting DVR services within resettlement agencies and religious and cultural centers?

**DVR RESPONSE: DVR is currently examining ways to strengthen the services it provides to “New Mainers”. At the recent Statewide Training Event, DVR offered a workshop session on this topic with prominent Maine presenters. Additionally, DVR is planning regional trainings in its offices which are located in refugee resettlement communities. Over the course of the year DVR will be examining, with its CareerCenter partners, new ways to conduct outreach and increase access for this growing population.**

**SRC COMMENT:**

Innovation & Expansion; it is not clear how these funds will be utilized to increase Vocational Rehabilitation services as described in the Rehab. Act. Also, the lack of consumer turn out for public forums regarding input on the State Plan is alarming. The SRC recommends that DVR closely examine the current process of seeking consumer input and devise a goal of increasing this input.

**DVR RESPONSE: This past year, Innovation and Expansion funds were used to help support the hiring of an executive director of the Maine State Independent Living Council and to support the State Rehabilitation Council. As the SRC is aware, regarding their own public forums that are held throughout the year, finding ways to encourage attendance at any of the public forums has been a challenge. DVR has had numerous conversations at the SRC and received technical assistance from the TACE NE in how to improve attendance and gain feedback to the state plan and the VR program in general. This year DVR did receive written comments to the state plan from a small number of individuals with disabilities due to our outreach on the DOL Facebook page and DOL Twitter feed. DVR agrees that attendance at public forums needs improvement.**

**ADDITIONAL SRC COMMENTS**:

1. There is concern regarding the lack of integration and alignment with Maine’s State Workforce Investment Board (as outlined in Rehab. Act)

**DVR RESPONSE: Currently, the DOL Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Director is a representative on the Committee on Disability and Employment which is a work group under the SWIB. DVR regional managers attend Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB) meetings.**

1. How much funding is going to directly assist eligible consumers to increase skills, gain credentials, certificates and college degrees? What percentage of case services expenditures are used for Rehab. Technology, purchase of Assistive Technology and training and Self Employment?

**DVR RESPONSE: The breakout of expenditures during the most recent year is as follows: Job Development and Placement – 27%, College/University training – 13%, Assessment – 13%, Other Services – 13%, Diagnosis and Treatment – 11%, On the Job Supports – 10%, Other Training – 7%, and Transportation – 6%.**

1. There are many clients who are “dropping out” of the system (1580) paired with a very long time to get into and IPE (299 days). Many of the goals of the State Plan are to increase services to be provided to new consumers. Given the dropout rate of current clients, time into IPE and the increased staff turnover (20%) these goals, though admirable, focus on growing the program. The SRC would like more of an emphasis to be placed on the clients currently in the program.

**DVR RESPONSE: As mentioned earlier, DVR shares the concern about premature exiters from the system. DVR will be closely examining the factors influencing exit including time to IPE.**

1. The State Plan a talks about the dropout rate of clients prior to entering an IPE. We would like to see the number of all clients that are dropping out of the system even after the development of an IPE. Having a breakdown of the OOS Category of the clients who are leaving the system would be helpful in determining is a disproportional number of Category I clients dropping out.

**DVR RESPONSE: This concern is addressed above.**

1. We believe drafting procedural directive to reflect the federal regulations that put into place a timeline for getting clients into an IPE (361.45(e)) would be helpful to the staff. The SRC is aware of the standard in the Final Rules of 6 months but at this time State is not meeting this standard appears more guidance to staff is needed.

**DVR RESPONSE: All VR Counselors receive training on timely development of Individualized Plans for Employment. Additionally, casework supervisors regularly review this data with VRCs whom they supervise to ensure that cases are moving appropriately toward IPE development. DVR is reviewing data to further determine barriers to timely IPE development and to aid in development of effective strategies to meet this standard.**

1. The SRC appreciates the efforts on behalf of DVR to realize integrated employment for people with disabilities. The SRC commends DVR for their work in achieving and exceeding the goal set in FY2013 of increasing successful employment

**DVR RESPONSE: DVR is committed to improving employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities who need vocational rehabilitation services. DVR thanks the SRC for its support in assisting DVR to meet its goals.**

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

Identify the types of services to be provided by the program for which the waiver of statewideness is requested.

The waiver request should also include:

* a written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the designated state unit the non-federal share of funds;
* a written assurance that designated state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect;
* a written assurance that all state plan requirements will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

This agency **has not** requested a waiver of statewideness.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is able to provide Vocational Rehabilitation services statewide under an Order of Selection. Therefore the waiver request is not necessary.

## Attachment 4.8(b)(1) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment System

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce investment system with respect to

* Federal, state, and local agencies and programs;
* if applicable, Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture; and
* if applicable, state use contracting programs.

**Attachment 4.8(b)(1) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment System**

**FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS**

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) works with other state agencies and many Councils and Committees whose focus is on individuals with disabilities. DVR has a long standing relationship and works very closely with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). DVR and DHHS have two memorandums of understanding (MOU); one MOU is with the Office of Aging and Disability Services, which serves individuals with developmental disabilities; the other MOU is with the Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS) which serves individuals with mental health issues. The MOU’s address the combined efforts that DVR and DHHS have initiated and clarify roles to improve the successful outcomes for these jointly served populations.

• DHHS Office of Aging and Disability Services and DVR/DBVI MOU (updated November 2013)

“This Memorandum is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor’s Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) in the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through a system change planning process for the purpose of implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices.  It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities.  ”

• DHHS Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services and DVR MOU (updated August 2013)

“This Memorandum is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor’s Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through its Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS), in the course of planning and implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities.”

Through these strong partnerships with OADS and SAMHS, DVR has been able to maximize federal and state funding to Maine by drawing down its full federal allotment for public rehabilitation services and accessing employment support services through Medicaid waivers. Additionally, DVR, OADS and SAMHS have developed and are implementing joint approaches to the workforce development of community rehabilitation providers and business engagement throughout the state.

• Interagency Support of Benefits Counseling – 2013

DVR continues to work closely with many other state partners to ensure that Maine’s benefits counseling services remain available to beneficiaries of SSI/SSDI, and specifically, DVR applicants and eligible clients. This allowed the services to remain intact while a resolution was determined on a federal level as to the continuation of this critical service in 2013. DVR currently administers a single contract with Maine’s approved WIPA provider, Maine Medical Center’s Department of Vocational Services, which includes funding from five sources of state and federal funds, including from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, Office of Aging and Disability Services, and the Bureau of Employment Services Disability Employment Initiative. The contract’s scope of work includes direct service provision of benefits counseling, training of VR counselors and case managers, and quarterly system development meetings to continue to build the capacity of the service to meet statewide needs.

* Memorandum of Understanding with CSD (Operator of Maine’s two Job Corps Centers) – 2013

In December 2013, Maine DVR finalized a Memorandum of Understanding with CSD – the operator of both of Maine’s Job Corps Centers. The purpose of the agreement is to set forth the commitments of CSD and the Maine DVR to meet the needs of students and young adults with disabilities and in particular to better coordinate the process of student transition to employment.

• Veterans Administration and VR MOU, November 2011

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Maine Department of Labor – Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services was finalized and signed in November 2011.

"The purpose of this MOU is to set forth the commitments of BRS and VA-VR&E to cooperate to meet the needs of veterans with disabilities... Through the efforts outlined in this agreement, BRS and VA-VR & E will strive to minimize duplication of services, improve information sharing and referral, and coordinate activities in accordance with all applicable statutes and regulations."

Maine DVR held its annual meeting with the Veterans’ Administration Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services on January 28, 2014. No changes were recommended to the agreement however some recommendations were made to improve collaboration. Maine DVR has identified staff who operate as veterans liaisons in each office.

• Department of Corrections and VR MOU – In progress

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Maine Department of Labor- Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and the Maine Department of Corrections is in process. Work thus far has resulted in two procedural directives outlining how the two agencies will work together to best meet the needs of individuals who are currently incarcerated or on probation and may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. In each of the larger offices a DVR staff member has been identified who serves as the liaison to the correctional agencies in their region.

DVR corrections liaisons meet as a group on a quarterly basis. DVR’s statewide training scheduled for June 2014 will include keynote speakers on corrections from Pennsylvania and Utah VR agencies.

• Workers Compensation Board and DVR MOU, November 2012

During 2012, representatives of the Workers Compensation Board (WCB) and Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation worked together to create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU was completed and signed, effective November 2012. DVR and the WCB are committed to working together to improve services and employment outcomes for individuals who, as a result of injury, are in need of vocational rehabilitation services to return to employment. Through the efforts outlined in the MOU, DVR and the WCB will strive to maximize employment opportunities for injured Maine workers, minimize duplication of services, improve information sharing and referrals, and coordinate activities in accordance with all applicable statutes and regulations.

In October 2013, DVR marked the first year of the Workers’ Comp MOU with a presentation to Workers’ Comp Board and DVR management on the success of the initiative’s first year.

Other:

DVR staff serve on a number of diverse councils, such as the Acquired Brain Injury Council, Developmental Disabilities Council, clubhouse boards, IDEA State Advisory Panel, and Employment First.

The advocacy and advice of the State Rehabilitation Council, Statewide Independent Living Council and Disability Rights Center, as well as groups such as Maine APSE and the Alliance for Full Participation, assist in ensuring that individual rights are being respected, laws are being followed, and practices are being improved to increase the successful employment of people with disabilities.

Programs carried out by the under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture:

The Division had meetings with USDA Rural Development a few years ago, but unfortunately loss of funding ended those discussions of formal cooperation. DVR is open to working with the USDA Rural Development in the future.

DVR does support staff involvement in the USDA’s AgrAbility project. In Maine, the AgrAbility project is administered by Alpha One, Goodwill Industries of New England and the University of Maine. The liaison to the project ensures that DVR staff is knowledgeable about AgrAbility and related resources. Grant funding for AgrAbility is ending during 2014 and DVR anticipates development of a fee for service agreement for AgrAbility services.

If applicable, state use contracting programs.

The Division has implemented an outcome payment system for employment support services for DVR clients with both private non-profit and for-profit Community Rehabilitation Providers. DVR contracts with Maine’s sole Center for Independent Living, Alpha One.

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

* Describe the designated state unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including provisions for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or, if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection, before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting.
* Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency with respect to
  + consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;
  + transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs;
  + roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
  + procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

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

DVR has a strong partnership with the Maine Department of Education (MDOE). Collaborative efforts have continued to expand over the last year. A MDOE staff member serves on the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the DVR Assistant Director serves on the IDEA Part B State Advisory Panel.

The Cooperative agreement between the Maine Department of Education, Special Services, Career and Technical Education and Adult Education and the Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired December 2010 was amended September 2011 to update language and clarify funding responsibilities and establish an interagency dispute process. Maine DVR had an on-site 107 Review in June 2011. At that time, the review team made recommendations for changes to the MOU which were then accepted by all the parties.

Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency:

DVR will assist in transition planning and in the development of student’s individualized education program (IEP). For students eligible for services with an agreed upon vocational goal, DVR is expected to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) before the student leaves the school setting. In providing transition services, DVR will facilitate the use of available and appropriate community-based services. Services will be provided in the most cost effective manner.

In recognition of the importance of promoting information sharing and in order to ensure an effective and timely system of referrals for DVR services, DVR requests that school personnel adopt the following process:

When a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) begins the transition planning process prior to entering ninth grade, the student and his/her parents or guardians will receive general information about VR services. This information will introduce VR and will inform the parents/guardians when it is appropriate to make a VR referral.

When the student to be referred is within two years of school graduation or exit, the services offered by VR should be re-introduced at the student’s IEP or 504 meeting. Both the student and the parents/guardians should have an opportunity to receive materials outlining VR services and to ask questions concerning the referral. If during or after the meeting, they (or the adult student) are interested in having a referral made for services the school will assist in doing so.

Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency with respect to consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services

The Cooperative Agreement between the Maine Department of Education, Special Services, Career and Technical Education and Adult Education and the Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired was written during FY 2010. The amended MOU was signed in September 2011.

The purpose of the Cooperative Agreement is to set forth the commitments of DOE and DVR to cooperate to meet the needs of students with disabilities and in particular to better coordinate the process of student transition.

The Agreement also sets forth that consultation and technical assistance will be provided to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services.

The mission of the MOU is to help students with disabilities achieve full participation in society by ensuring equal opportunity and access to education, employment and community.

To achieve this mission:

• People will work together for the student’s benefit

• Students and families will be included and respected

• Regular and meaningful communication will be established

• Personnel Development will be collaborative

• Data will be shared to improve outcomes

The parties shall agree on methods to maintain updated information about best practices and resources related to the transition of students including the use of Dispatches and maintenance of a copy of the Agreement on the agencies’ websites.

Consultation and technical assistance to educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;

DOE and DVR will work together to inform the following entities about the existence and intent of this Agreement:

• Superintendents of Schools

• Directors of Special Education

• Parent Training & Information Center

• DVR Regional Managers, Supervisors, and Transition Counselors

• Directors of Career & Technical Education

• Directors of Adult Education

• Client Assistance Program

• Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS)

• State Special Education Advisory Panel

Effective implementation requires ongoing communication and sharing of information between the parties. It is especially critical that any changes in resources, regulations, policies and procedures that affect students served jointly by DOE and DVR/DBVI be immediately communicated and that coordinated efforts are made to mitigate any negative impact that may occur as a result of those changes.

DVR will provide schools with an orientation video, brochures, and PowerPoint presentation on services for transition-age youth and a representative to serve as a member of the Maine IDEA Part B State Advisory Panel. DVR will also support VR counselors, with transition caseloads to join Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) and participate in regional and state meetings and training. DVR will provide technical assistance to DOE and school districts on disability-specific information and resources issues and issues concerning eligibility and referral for services as requested. DVR will provide technical assistance and training as requested to DOE and school districts on the Americans with Disabilities Act in conjunction with the State ADA Coordinator.

DOE will notify DVR of issues of mutual interest identified during monitoring or as a result of a special education due process finding.

Transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs;

DOE and DVR will collaborate on possible grant opportunities that have an impact on services to students.

DOE will assist DVR to share information about vocational rehabilitation services with students with disabilities who may be eligible for VR, and provide DVR with de-identified data on an annual basis of numbers and demographics of transition-age students with disabilities who have reached ninth grade in public and private schools across Maine. DOE will provide information to DVR on eligibility, availability, and accessibility of CTE (Career and Technical Education) programs. DOE will provide technical assistance to schools on IEP transition plan development.

DVR will participate in DOE’s efforts to maintain students in school and to prevent and reduce drop-out rates among students with disabilities. The agency will collaborate with schools on the delivery of the "Career Exploration Workshop" curriculum for eligible students with disabilities. At least annually, an in-house training for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors on topics in best practices in working with transition-age youth will be provided.

Roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;

This agreement does not involve any financial compensation or exchange of funds between DOE and DVR/DBVI. However, it is the expectation that in the development and implementation of services, DOE and DVR/DBVI will provide in-kind resources and will promote cost efficiency and non-duplication through collaboration. Nothing in this agreement relieves either party of the responsibility to provide or pay for any transition service that the agency would otherwise provide to a student with disabilities who meets the eligibility criteria of that agency. If a participating agency, meaning a state or local agency other than the educational agencies responsible for the student’s education, that is financially and legally responsible for providing transition services to the student fails to provide the transition services described in the IEP, the education agency shall reconvene the IEP team to identify alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives for the child set out in the IEP.

DOE will provide representation to the State Rehabilitation Council, as well as technical assistance and training on educational issues to DVR/DBVI as requested.

DVR will collect de-identified information on informal/formal complaints and due process hearings that involve school-aged youth; this data will be provided on an annual basis to DOE, as well as numbers and demographics of transition-aged students served.

DVR will provide a list of Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and the schools they serve to DOE and each school district on an annual basis. A protocol to serve students who are in out-of-district placements in accordance with current policy will be developed.

Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services;

• DVR will inform DOE in writing of procedural changes that may impact the eligibility of students with disabilities for vocational rehabilitation services, so that DOE may disseminate the information to local school districts.

• DOE will notify DVR concerning proposed changes in regulations, policies and procedures at the state or federal level that may impact students with whom DVR works.

In recognition of the importance of promoting information sharing and in order to ensure an effective and timely system of referrals for DVR services, DVR requests that school personnel adopt the following process:

1. When a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is in the transition planning process prior to entering ninth grade, the student and his/her parents or guardians will receive general information about VR services.

2. When a student is within two years of school graduation or exit from school, the services offered by VR should be re-introduced at the student’s IEP or 504 meeting. Both the student and the parents/guardians should have an opportunity to receive VR materials outlining services and to ask questions concerning the referral.

3. VR Counselors should be invited to attend IEP meetings for students who have been determined eligible for services, as well as in cases where the presence of the Counselor at the meeting would assist in determining the appropriateness of a referral to VR. VR Counselors will provide support to the IEP team to facilitate the IEP process as appropriate. DVR will provide information as requested to school personnel on access to "Long Term Support."

DOE will provide guidance to schools on the release of information (including assessment, IEP, Summary of Performance etc.) for students who are working with DVR or who are in the eligibility process.

DVR will inform the designated school case manager as to the status of the DVR referral/intake process on individual students with appropriate releases. DVR will determine eligibility and provide services to eligible students within two years prior to expected high school graduation or exit.

Interagency Disputes; If disagreements arise regarding any aspect of the implementation of this Cooperative Agreement, they should first be attempted to be resolved between the specific parties involved. If this is unsuccessful, the dispute should be taken to the next successive leadership level until resolution is achieved.

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

Describe the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

N/A

## Attachment 4.8(b)(4) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

Describe the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide the following services to individuals with the most significant disabilities:

* supported employment services; and
* extended services.

**Attachment 4.8(b)(4) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services**

To ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities receive quality vocational rehabilitation services and equal access to employment opportunities throughout the state of Maine, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation takes a multi-faceted approach that includes workforce development, engagement of business and the availability of support services for clients who need them.

**EMPLOYMENT SPECIALISTS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM UPDATES**

DVR, in collaboration with the Maine Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), continues to contract with Syntiro, a technical assistance and training provider, to administer a comprehensive workforce development system for Employment Specialists in the Community Rehabilitation Provider sector. This project, Employment for ME Workforce Development System, includes basic certification (ACRE) training, advanced topical skills training, maintenance of a comprehensive training calendar and a mentoring program for newly certified employment specialists. The system was launched in July 2011.

Syntiro conducted one Employment Specialist Certification class with 27 graduates in the spring of 2012. Syntiro assisted in the delivery of an additional certification class conducted by ICI/UMass Boston during the fall of 2012 with an additional 21 certified Employment Specialists graduates. Syntiro held the second Employment Specialists Certification class in June 2012. Twenty Employment Specialists were certified. Syntiro ’s third Employment Specialist Certification class is scheduled for April 2014 and there are currently 27 people registered.

Syntiro trained 24 participants in Advanced Topical Trainings beginning in the fall of 2012 on Job Development in Rural Areas and PASS (which included onsite follow up and technical assistance).

An Advanced Topical Training, The Apple Edge: Information Technology as Supports in the Workplace, presented via webinar by Marsha Therlkeld, Senior Program Manager at WiSe, was held March 29 & 31, 2013. Thirty-one participants attended. An Employment for all Workshop presented by Corey Smith was held for 21 participants in May of 2013.

In November 2013, eleven participants attended Self-Employment: The 411 with presenter Beth Keeton. Two other trainings are scheduled for this fiscal year. May 16th, Career Planning and June Fading Support in the Workplace.

Syntiro conducted seven monthly webinars from September 2012 – June 2013 for the State’s rehabilitation community addressing the following topics.

(1) An overview of Maine’s Workforce System;

(2) Maine’s Business Leadership Network;

(3) Celebrating Systemic Change in Maine Employment Supports: Maine’s Medicaid Infrastructure Grant;

(4) Transition;

(5) Employment First;

(6) An Introduction to Customized Employment; and

(7) Maine’s Career Exploration Workshop.

Webinars from October 2013 – February 2014 included the following topics:

1. Maine's Workforce Development System: Opportunities and Needs, 58 participants
2. The Maine DD Council's New Employment Initiative: An Overview of the Newly Funded Projects with 33 participants.
3. How Will the New Person Centered Planning Process Support Employment for People with Developmental Disabilities? Over 81 participant registered
4. Employment Readiness Scale had 67 people registered.

Webinar #5, A Community Conversation is scheduled for April 2014 and currently has 58 registrations.

Participation in these webinars continues to grow from 20 to over 80 registrants.

Syntiro has also established a registry of Certified Employment Specialists in Maine with currently certified Employment Specialists. ACRE updates its list quarterly and the list is posted on the project website (www.employmentformewds.org), so it is available to providers seeking to verify certification status.

The mentor program matches newly certified Employment Specialists (protégés) with experienced Employment Specialists and has been well received and proven to be a valuable component of the Workforce System. Mentors meet at least monthly with their protégé and work from individualized learning plans designed to address the needs of the protégé. The mentors also meet monthly to share their experiences and learn from one another in a community of learning. The program continues to thrive in its third year.

**Business Relations Update**

Maine’s two Business Relations Specialists continued to reach out to large businesses across the state to develop new and strengthen existing partnerships with the end goal of increasing the employment of individuals with disabilities in Maine’s workforce. Contact and partnership discussions were initiated with 65 companies. Our most active/engaged partnerships include Procter & Gamble/Tambrands, Bank of America, Cianbro, General Dynamics/Bath Iron Works, CVS/Caremark, Eastern Maine Medical Center, Duck Trap River, Jackson Labs, L.L. Bean, Longhorns’ Steakhouse, ME General Hospital, N.H. Bragg, New Balance, Pine State Tobacco, Lowes and Walgreens.

Near the end of this reporting period, both Business Relations Specialist positions were vacated, leaving the unit unstaffed for a few months. One Specialist returned to the position and the Bureau is now in the process of re-evaluating/re-designing the strategies used to sustain business partnerships. In the recent past, identifying individuals interested in and qualified for vacancies posted by our business partners has been a significant challenge. So, greater priority is now being placed on developing the “supply” or field side of the pipeline. The B.R. Specialist is conducting regional focus groups to get information from local VR staff and providers in order to build “Regional Business Relations Plans.” This will increase the buy-in and reflect regional nuances, hopefully resulting in more hires through partnerships.

Another strategy change going forward is to emphasize the options or levels of engagement in which the business can engage. Although employment remains the ultimate goal of any partnership, we are encouraging a clear commitment to other (related activities) such as informational interviewing, tours of the business, mentoring, critiquing resumes, interview practice sessions, etc. This switch in focus is also being adopted by the Maine Business Leadership Network in order to engage new business members.

As of this reporting period, one B.R. Specialist position remains vacant. Maine BRS is considering ways to use the position to increase the visibility and activities around business relations locally (within the regions).

**Maine APSE -**

Maine APSE and Maine DVR continue a close partnership as we continue to work together on a number of projects and make plans to co-sponsor another statewide training conference in June, 2014.  The conference will feature Janet LaBreck, RSA Commissioner, and Randy Loss, from PA VR, and Gordon Swensen from Utah OVR.  Randy and Gordon will share what has been working for them in their states regarding assisting people with disabilities who are coming out of corrections faculties and being referred to VR.  The theme of the two day statewide training is “Celebrating Partnerships” and will highlight much of the work Maine DVR has been doing in partnerships with Maine APSE and others this past year to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities.  The DVR director and one other VR Counselor sit on the Maine APSE board, and several other VR staff are members of the Maine APSE Chapter.

**Extended services \**

DVR was involved in developing and supporting the Fall Forum of the Acquired Brain Injury Advisory Council this year, "Brain Injury and Employment." Two staff members were on the steering committee and 25 VRCs attended the full day training. The focus of this training was to present tools and information on aiding individuals with brain injury to successful employment. Brain injury and employment was also the subject of a breakout session at DVR’s 2012 statewide training which was held in June, 2012.

DVR continues to receive limited funds from the State of Maine to provide the purchase of extended support services for individuals in all disability groups with separate specific funding for individuals with acquired brain injuries. These funds provide additional support to individuals who need ongoing employment supports.

## Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

#### Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

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

* the number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
* the number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
* projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

**Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development**

**DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT**

The system for collecting and analyzing data indicates approximately 10,000 individuals with disabilities will be served by Vocational Rehabilitation in FFY 2014. Current service delivery is performed by Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) staff, consisting of 65 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, 8 Paraprofessionals, 9 Casework Supervisors, and 3 Regional Managers. DVR staff receives administrative and organizational support and guidance from the Director of DVR, the Director of SIQA (Systems Improvement and Quality Assurance), the Director of the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened, DVR Assistant Director, and six Rehabilitation Consultants (program specialists) and clerical/secretarial support services from 23 office personnel. DVR has an additional five time-limited Rehabilitation Counselor I’s . Data gathered during the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant when DVR also had temporary RCI’s demonstrated that DVR’s ability to efficiently meet the needs of clients was significantly improved when these positions were available.

In FFY 2013, Maine DVR experienced a turnover rate just over 20 percent among its Rehabilitation Counselors. In FFY 2012 the turnover rate was at 11 percent and prior to that DVR has averaged greater than 15 percent annual turnover rate of Rehabilitation Counselors. There are currently 4 RC II positions that are vacant. Maine’s turnover rate continues to be deeply affected by retirement; the age of its workforce and low wages when compared to private sector employment. Thirty percent of the individuals who left employment, during this reporting period, retired from State employment. Turnover rates over the past 5 years, average just below 16%. Assuming retention levels remain consistent, it can be projected that DVR staffing needs could require as many as 51 new Rehabilitation Counselors in the next 5 years. The average turnover rate for non-rehabilitation counselor staff has been relatively consistent, approximately 13-15 percent annually, until this year. In examining staffing patterns of all other DVR staff, the turnover rate is approximately 20 percent. During this reporting year, Maine DVR has replaced:

1 Regional Manager

2 Casework Supervisors and an additional Casework Supervisor position continues to be unfilled

8 Clerical/Support Personnel

3 Rehabilitation Consultants, with one Rehabilitation Consultant position that continues to be unfilled

When applying the average turnover rates, it can be forecasted that Maine DVR will need to replace:

1 Regional Manager,

6 Casework Supervisors,

5 Paraprofessionals,

15 Clerical/Support Personnel and

4 Rehabilitation Consultants

in the next five years.

The projections for staff vacancies are dependent upon current levels of funding as well as stability in state hiring and contracts. Maine DVR will keep RSA apprised of developments on this issue.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Row | Job Title | Total positions | Current vacancies | Projected vacancies over the next 5 years |
| 1 | Director Vocational Rehabilitation | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | Director SIQA | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | Director, Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | Assistant Director Vocational Rehabilitation | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | Regional Manager | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| 6 | Casework Supervisor | 9 | 1 | 6 |
| 7 | Rehabilitation Consultant | 6 | 1 | 4 |
| 8 | Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II | 65 | 4 | 51 |
| 9 | Paraprofessional | 8 | 0 | 5 |
| 10 | Support Personnel | 23 | 1 | 15 |

2. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

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

The University of Southern Maine (USM) is the only in-state institution of higher education offering a graduate program which satisfies the standards set forth by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). During the most recent year, USM had 27 students enrolled full-time or part-time in its Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling Program. Three students graduated during the past academic year. USM classes are offered on campus and via distance education. USM does not offer RSA grant funding to rehabilitation program participants at this time however USM has submitted an application for long-term grant funding from RSA and anticipates receiving notification before the beginning of the 2014-15 school year.

The University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) offers an undergraduate program in Rehabilitation Services which prepares graduates for master’s degree programs in the rehabilitation field. UMF typically graduates 25 to 30 students a year with a B.S. in Rehabilitation Services. This program does not meet the standards set forth by RSA for "fully qualified" vocational rehabilitation counselors (i.e. qualifies to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) exam). Maine DVR has offered summer internships to UMF undergraduates to expose them to careers in vocational rehabilitation.

Maine DVR has limited resources to pay educational/training costs associated in its efforts to develop and maintain a fully qualified staff and, as such, conducts on-going investigation of distance education programs that offer RSA grant funding to participants. During this reporting year, Maine DVR has had six Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) enrolled in the RSA-funded distance education Rehabilitation Counseling program at Virginia Commonwealth University and five VRCs enrolled in the University of Southern Maine to complete "core courses” During this year, four VRC’s have graduated from VCU and four VRC’s have successfully passed the CRC exam.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Row | Institutions | Students enrolled | Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA | Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA | Graduates from the previous year |
| 1 | Virginia Commonwealth University | 6 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| 2 | University of Southern Maine | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 |  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

*Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel*

Describe the development (updated on an annual basis) and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the Coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

DVR, with the support of the Commissioner of the Department of Labor, continues to work closely with the State of Maine’s Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) to fill vacancies. Recent recruitment efforts have included electronic vacancy postings on national and State of Maine websites, local postings with community providers and information sharing with USM, the only Maine college that offers a rehabilitation program. Recruitment efforts for fully qualified rehabilitation counselors have become increasingly difficult, in comparison to previous years. With high turnover rates and less than desirable number of candidates graduating from the University of Southern Maine (USM), Maine’s sole rehabilitation counseling program, the division has struggled with finding and hiring fully qualified candidates, as defined by the RSA. During FFY 2013, thirteen rehabilitation counselors were hired; eleven of the thirteen Rehabilitation Counselors hired, that is 84 percent, were not fully qualified by RSA standards. Currently, 38 percent of all rehabilitation counselors do not meet fully qualified status. Twenty of the rehabilitation counselors that work for DVR require a Master’s degree to meet the standard. An additional six counselors require “core” courses. As noted in the chart above, eleven individuals are currently enrolled in an education program in order to meet the standards, as outlined.

The DVR Director sits on the Advisory Board of the University of Southern Maine’s Rehabilitation Counseling program, strengthening and coordinating the relationship between the two organizations. DVR invites USM and UMF faculty to participate in training opportunities throughout the year.

A Rehabilitation Consultant works closely with the Bureau of Human Resources to assist eligible individuals with disabilities to access Maine State Government’s "Special Appointment" program. Two of our staff members who have disabilities were hired this year. DVR has a number of staff with disabilities and provides appropriate accessibility accommodations to support employment. The State of Maine is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer.

An area of concern for Maine DVR is the retention of qualified staff. The State of Maine has recently begun to offer merit or cost of living increases again after being discontinued in 2008. DVR is committed to offering personnel development opportunities that enhance the work environment and support service delivery. DVR continues to review and assess essential job functions within the Division in view of the CSPD requirements and seeks the development of alternative and evidence-based approaches in the provision and maintenance of high quality service delivery.

*Personnel Standards*

Describe the state agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

1. standards that are consistent with any national or state-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services; and
2. to the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the State Plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, institutions of higher education, and other public agencies of these steps and the timelines for taking each step.

Be sure to include the following:

* specific strategies for retraining, recruiting, and hiring personnel;
* the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards;
* procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period;
* the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards;
* the identification of a plan for training newly hired personnel who do not meet the established standards to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

PERSONNEL STANDARDS

Maine DVR personnel requirements and hiring practices are aligned with the Rehabilitation Act mandates and its regulations. The State of Maine does not have an established state standard for fully qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors so defers to the Rehabilitation Services Administration standard. This standard states that an individual must possess a Master’s Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, CRC status, or be eligible to sit for the CRC examination when filling Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II vacancies. Priority is then given to applicants and staff who possess master’s degrees in counseling or a counseling-related degree, defined as Social Work, Psychology, Special Education, Rehabilitation and Counseling - which meets the standard if a graduate course in Counseling Theories and Techniques of Counseling course was completed as part of the degree requirements. Other required courses including: Assessment, Occupational Information or Placement, Medical, Psychosocial and Cultural Aspects of Disabilities, and in Community Resources or Delivery of Rehabilitation Services.

When recruiting or hiring new staff, Maine DVR gives preference to fully qualified individuals. However, if there is a critical agency staffing need and recruitment efforts do not secure a suitable candidate, DVR can hire individuals conditionally. These individuals are required to enter into an agreement to acquire the appropriate credentials to become fully qualified under a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) plan. The CSPD education plans, for becoming "fully qualified" according to the standards set forth by the Rehabilitation Act, are responsive to the needs of the individual counselor, and agreed to by management. The plan is incorporated into the employee’s annual performance review to ensure continuity and progress toward "fully qualified" status. Counselors who require a full master’s degree program to meet the "fully qualified" status are allotted up to five years after completion of their probationary period to meet the CSPD requirements. Those with related counseling master’s degrees who meet the qualifications to sit for the CRC exam or who are currently in a master’s degree program in counseling are provided accelerated timeframes dependent on remaining coursework. Maine DVR strives to ensure that all CSPD plans are accomplished in the most cost effective manner.

*Staff Development*

Describe the state agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated state unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

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

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Staff development is delivered through formal and informal modalities, internal and external. DVR employees participate in annual performance reviews, a portion of which specifically addresses personnel development. At these reviews, staff and supervisors jointly identify training required to address performance enhancement.

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services hosts a biennial, two-day statewide training event at which multiple trainings - identified and prioritized by staff surveys, case reviews and oversight bodies (i.e. State Rehabilitation Council, CSPD Advisory Committee) - are offered to all staff. Training needs and activities are often identified and offered at the regional/office levels through free or low cost workshops. DVR also supports educational programming for existing staff seeking to meet fully qualified status and, for those who have achieved CRC status and require on-going CRC training credits, by acting as a sanctioned provider of CRC training credits.

Maine has limited RSA-funded In-Service Training Grant dollars to support personnel development. Maine DVR has made continuous efforts to seek and identify pertinent learning opportunities, particularly through the use of distance learning. Videoconferencing capacity has been established on a statewide basis and has led to extensive learning collaborations.

Maine DVR staff also seeks distance training opportunities through webinars, online training and teleconferences such as those offered by the Institute for Community Inclusion, the National Clearing House of Rehabilitation Training Materials, Independent Living Research Utilization, Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), Workforce3One, Social Security Administration, the National Coalition for Parent Education Advocacy Training Center and Maine’s Parent Information and Resource Center.

DVR’s new counselor training curriculum is a two-week, comprehensive overview of the DVR program, policy and procedures and includes topics such as rehabilitation technology, job placement and assessment, vocational counseling, as well as interactive training modules in the casework flow process. New counselor training is routinely evaluated and revised to meet the changing needs of clients and to incorporate recent evidence-based practices and requirements of the RSA and CRCC.

During New Counselor Training, all DVR staff has the opportunity to refresh skills by attending any training session. In addition, training has been designed for paraprofessionals and support staff to increase their knowledge of the rehabilitation process, procedural directives and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Rules.

DVR continues to make use of the New England Technical and Continuing Education Center (TACE) for its technical assistance and training. This year was notable, not only for increased training events sponsored by TACE, which provide a significant cost savings to DVR but they provide training and assistance with issues that are cutting-edge and up-to-date. This year, TACE also supported Maine DVR with a comprehensive program of staff development involving Motivational Interviewing (MI) Strategies. They provided a number of MI workshops to VR counselors and the leadership team throughout the State.

Training opportunities and conference materials are shared through a number of statewide means, including the Internet and DVR intranet and counselor, managerial and supervisory networking activities and interactions. A library of training resources, including texts, journals and videotapes addressing vocational rehabilitation topic areas is available to be loaned to regional offices as needed. Materials include Institute on Rehabilitation Issues publications, CDs offering American Sign Language tutorials, videotapes addressing learning disabilities, Consumer Choice News, National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, and other documents from the various National Rehabilitation and Research and Training Programs throughout the United States.

Over the past year, a continued focus of staff development has been on the administration and interpretation of assessments used as part of the DVR Career Exploration Workshop (CEW) as well as deaf awareness and other disability-related awareness. During FY 2013 DVR staff participated in 98.5 hours of DVR sponsored training representing a total of 579 attendees.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date of Training | Title of Training | Participants: includes VR counselors, Support Staff and Supervisors | Hours | Total Hours |
| 10/23/12 | Ethics | 21 | 2 | 42 |
| 10/24/12 | Verbal Judo | 23 | 6 | 138 |
| 10/30/12 | ERS Coding and procedure Review | 9 | 1 | 9 |
| 11/7/12 | Occupational Therapy Overview | 5 | 1 | 5 |
| 11/8/12 | Deaf Awareness and Hearing Aid Protocol | 39 | 3 | 117 |
| 11/13/12 | Motivational Interviewing Strategies | 17 | 6 | 102 |
| 11/14/12 | Aware ‐ New Features and Changes | 80 | 3 | 240 |
| 11/20/12 | Deaf Awareness and Hearing Aid Protocol | 41 | 3 | 123 |
| 11/26/2012 - 12/14/2012 | New Counselor Training | 8 | 50 | 400 |
| 12/4/12 | Motivational Interviewing Strategies ‐ Session 2 | 14 | 5.5 | 77 |
| 1/5/13 | American Indian VR | 9 | 1.5 | 13.5 |
| 1/14/13 | ERS Refresher | 38 | 1 | 38 |
| 2/4/13 | Pathway to Employment | 18 | 2.5 | 45 |
| 3/15/13 | Motivational Interviewing ‐ Part 1 | 10 | 5.5 | 55 |
| 3/22/13 | Motivational Interviewing ‐ Part 2 | 7 | 5.5 | 38.5 |
| 4/4/13 | Transition Counselor Workshop | 44 | 5.5 | 242 |
| 5/1/2013 - 5/15/2013 | New Counselor Training | 6 | 50 | 300 |
| 5/29/13 | Exploring Ethical Boundaries in VR | 14 | 6 | 84 |
| 6/3/13 | Shoot for the Stars ‐ Video and Discussion | 11 | 2 | 22 |
| 6/6/13 | Job Development | 10 | 1.5 | 15 |
| 6/14/13 | Working with People with Disabilities and Criminal Histories | 20 | 6 | 120 |
| 6/26/13 | Motivational Interviewing ‐ Part 1 | 11 | 5.5 | 60.5 |
| 7/11/13 | Employment Specialist as Business Coach Training Pilot | 11 | 11 | 121 |
| 7/12/13 | Motivational Interviewing ‐ Part 2 | 26 | 5.5 | 143 |
| 7/17/13 | World of Work Inventory Interpretation ‐ Level I | 17 | 6 | 102 |
| 7/24/13 | World of Work Inventory Interpretation ‐ Level II | 17 | 6 | 102 |
| 8/13/13 | Motivational Interviewing for Supervisors | 13 | 5.5 | 71.5 |
| 9/26/13 | DSM‐V Changes and Implications for Rehabilitation | 53 | 5.5 | 291.5 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Annual Totals | 592 | 212.5 | 3117.5 |

#### Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

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

**PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS**

DVR has six staff members who are Deaf (one Regional Manager, four Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (RCDs) and one Rehabilitation Assistant) and able to communicate with Deaf clients in ASL. One of the new RCD positions is time-limited and will be working with clients who live in the northern part of the state where there is less access to interpreters and other support services for individuals who are Deaf.

The job duties of the Division Director for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened, who is Deaf himself, has added supervision of Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf to the position’s responsibility. The director has been helping DVR to provide a more consistent message about the services we provide around the state to individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing. The Division Director meets once a month with his staff to address topics such as best practices in case management, communication strategies for individuals who use gestural communication for their primary mode of communication, among many other topics. Staff who are Deaf have videophones at their desks for visual communication with consumers. An additional six employees are proficient in ASL, including the DVR Director. DVR offices are co-located in Maine’s CareerCenter network. CareerCenters offer telecommunications devices including Interpretype, Ubi Duo, Videolinks, Video Relay and Video Remote Interpreting. Captioning services are available as needed. An online video introduction to CareerCenter services for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing is available.

Spoken language interpreter services are accessed through a statewide contract for both in-person and telephone interpreting. DVR also employs some bilingual staff. Additionally, DVR through its Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened, is working closely with the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired to increase availability of Deaf-Blind Interpreters and Support Service Providers. DVR is also currently assisting the State of Maine in development of a statewide contract for Video Remote Interpreting.

#### Coordination of Personnel Development Under the individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

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

**COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IMPROVEMENT ACT**

As outlined in Section 606 (Employment of Individuals with Disabilities) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, Maine DVR continually makes "positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in programs assisted under this title". Currently 25 Transition VR Counselors are assigned to work with the more than 200 Maine High Schools, as well as with out-of-school youth and youth attending private institutions. Transition-aged youth represent one third of all DVR cases in Maine and one of the fastest growing populations served by DVR. Maine DVR has a Statewide Transition Counselor Advisory Group that meets quarterly to promote best practices in the provision of VR transition services. During the last year, this group received technical assistance from the New England TACE and addressed both the dissemination of best practices and the development of strategies to target areas in need of improvement.

As outlined in DVR’s Cooperative Agreement with the Maine Department of Education (MDOE), DVR has provided technical assistance to MDOE and school districts on disability-specific information and resources issues and issues concerning eligibility and referral for services as requested. One way that DVR has provided this information is through participation in MDOE’s State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG). This five-year grant from the US Department of Education targets five significant areas of need concerning personnel development and the education of children with disabilities. Improving transition services is one of the identified five goals. The DVR Assistant Director as well as a Rehabilitation Counselor II both sit on the Transition work group and the Assistant Director is also a member of the larger SPDG Advisory Council.

During the past year, DVR worked very closely with the SPDG to participate in a number of trainings for schools and other stakeholders on transition planning for students with disabilities. By June 2013 all school districts had attended these trainings. In early 2013, Maine was selected to receive intensive technical assistance from the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC). As a result, Maine sent a team of stakeholders – including the DVR Assistant Director - to the 2013 Annual Capacity Building Institute. As a result of the plan developed at that conference, a number of follow-up steps were developed. In September 2013, the SPDG grant sponsored a statewide conference on Transition. Staff from DVR and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired participated in the two-day event as well as served as presenters during workshop sessions. Among the topics covered were the Transition Career Exploration Workshop, Serving students with significant disabilities, partnering with the Department of Health and Human Services and many more. Stakeholders were broken into regional groups that then developed regional plans to strengthen transition planning and outcomes for youth. During the 2013-14 school year, regional trainings were offered – with DVR participation – to further refine and implement these plans. The Transition Career Exploration Workshop was highlighted as an excellent source for assessment information for use in transition planning.

The DVR Assistant Director is a member of the IDEA Part B State Advisory Panel which is responsible for advising MDOE on issues related to students with disabilities ages 3-20.

## Attachment 4.11(a) Statewide Assessment

Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:

* individuals with most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
* individuals with disabilities who are minorities;
* individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program; and
* individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.

Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

**4.11(a) Statewide Assessment**

**COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2013 – 2015**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) assists eligible individuals with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and retain employment in integrated community settings. DVR administers the General Vocational Rehabilitation program in Maine for the Rehabilitation Services Administration. A separate program is available to individuals who are blind or have visual impairments through the Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired. This Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment focuses on the General Vocational Rehabilitation program and on the needs of individuals eligible for those services.

The assessment, conducted jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), is designed to answer important questions about the population eligible for DVR services that live in Maine and their vocational rehabilitation needs. The assessment serves to inform DVR’s strategic plan and goal development for the next three fiscal years, 2013 – 2015. In compiling the assessment, DVR relied on a variety of publicly-available sources, including survey information from the United States Census Bureau and data from the Rehabilitation Services Administration and the Social Security Administration. DVR gathered information from the Maine Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services, as well as numerous stakeholder groups, including people with disabilities, employers, and Vocational Rehabilitation counselors.

Maine is a large geographical state, which spans 30,843 square miles. The state is primarily rural in nature with a dispersed population of 1.3 million people and density of 43 people per square mile. Census data available in 2010 indicates that the population is primarily homogeneous with 95 percent of the residents being white and a median age of 42.7 years.

At the time of this report, Maine was slowly rebounding from the 2007 to 2009 period of recession and seeing only modest improvements in the economy and labor market. Historically, Maine’s economy has been based on goods producing industries, such as manufacturing and natural resources, but a trend to jobs requiring higher educational attainment in service producing, knowledge-based industries has been occurring over the last several years.

DVR provides vocational rehabilitation services to thousands of Mainers with disabilities each year, despite significant downturns in the economy and severe state budget shortfalls. A major affect on the data and service provision during the past three years is that in October 2010 DVR successfully eliminated its waitlist in all three disability priority categories, which had been in place since 2001.

Between January 2009 and October 2010, DVR worked on streamlining many of its processes to increase efficiencies, contain costs, and contact many people who were on the waitlist (some of whom in categories 2 and 3 had been waiting for years), as well as those who had lost contact with the agency. A large percentage of people were found to either not able or ready to re-engage with DVR at the time they were contacted, which clearly had a negative impact on our rehabilitation rate, but resulted in caseload numbers that were truly representative of active and progressing cases.

Individuals served by DVR remain generally very satisfied with the services that they receive and report feeling that they are treated with dignity and respect. DVR has also received very positive feedback from providers, clients and our other agency partners that it is extremely helpful to all that DVR no longer has a waitlist. In addition to the Market Decision, LLC, client satisfaction survey, DVR received valuable feedback by working with our SRC who conducted a facilitated public forum and developed an ongoing client satisfaction survey that is maintained on their website. The public forum provided DVR with some targeted constructive feedback about the DVR program, including transition services, job development and consistency of services.

In terms of case service expenditures, job development and placement continues to be the largest single service group, representing 20 to 26 percent of total DVR case costs each year. A number of service groups saw large decreases, including maintenance services, transportation costs, and diagnosis and treatment services. DVR has seen a drop in the cost of College or University Training, and Occupational/ Vocational Training as well. Several specific new procedural directives were developed for counselors as guidance in determining that all financial assistance provided is directly related to a specific employment goal and absolutely necessary for an individual to obtain and maintain employment.

In identifying the general population eligible for DVR services and estimating unmet needs of those with significant disabilities, this report used data available through the American Community Survey, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/23000.html>

the Social Security Administration, and the Maine Departments of Education and Health and Human Services:

• At the end of FFY 2010, DVR had 6,311 individuals in an active case status.

• For that same year, the ACS estimated that there were approximately 73,000 working-age adults with a disability who were not employed.

• Data from the Social Security Administration provided an estimate of 74,729 beneficiaries who would meet the DVR eligibility definition of “substantial impediment to employment.”

• Approximately one-third of DVR’s total caseload is students transitioning to adulthood. Of DVR’s sixty-six vocational rehabilitation counselors, twenty-five are assigned to school systems and working with youth in transition.

The Maine Department of Education reported an anticipated need of employment services in 2010 for 10,504 special education students, ages 14 – 20, of which those with learning disabilities and physical impairments were the largest disability populations.

That noted, Maine, like the rest of the United States, is experiencing an increase in the numbers of individuals identified with Autism spectrum disorders and the most significant percentage of that increase has been in Lincoln, Hancock, and Waldo Counties – along Maine’s mid-coast.

• The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is a growing partner in the support and delivery of employment services for people with disabilities although recent staffing and funding cuts have negatively impacted access to services for people with mental illness, developmental disabilities and brain injury.

· DHHS supports approximately 4,700 people through a Center for Medicaid & Medicare Services 1915c Waiver, which allows individuals who have been found eligible for the Office of Adults with Cognitive and Physical Disabilities Developmental Services (Note: name has changed to Office of Aging and Disability Services) to become prepared for employment through Community Supports Services that can assist the person to volunteer, increase work-readiness skills and address issues of health and safety.

Developmental Services provides on-the-job support through the waivers to about 900 people who are working throughout Maine and there are approximately 3,000 working-age MaineCare waiver recipients who are not working. Among those individuals, employment and referral to DVR are revisited during the person-centered planning process at least annually and DVR has seen an increase in referrals since the last assessment.

Unfortunately, however, Developmental Services has a waitlist for individuals coming out of the school system to access waiver services, which impacts clients being able to obtain necessary long term supports after DVR services are provided.

In addition to providing ongoing support to over 200 employed individuals with mental illness, the Office of Adult Mental Health Services at DHHS has a number of initiatives that promote employment among the individuals they serve. These include providing funding for community mental health agency employment specialists, as well as expanding the use of a clubhouse model to achieve community-based employment outcomes in three locations across the state.

In 2012, three more clubhouses have opened across the state to add to the two that were already here in Maine. DVR works closely with those club houses, and is in the process of developing a procedural directive so that clubhouse and VR staff will have clear direction on best practices and guidance regarding services that each entity will provide. This draft will be finalized in May, 2013, and presented at a joint meeting of clubhouse members and staff and VR staff in June, 2013.

Vocational rehabilitation services to minorities with disabilities in Maine have always been a challenge to DVR because of the state’s homogeneous population and low ethnic diversity. In a state that has little statistical diversity of minority populations, Native Americans represent a historically recognizable group and DVR continues to work collaboratively with the Houlton Band of Maliseets, which was awarded a five year Section 121 grant in FY 2008. A vast majority of DVR’s population is white with only 3 percent being identified as a minority, which is in comparison to the 6 percent identified in the American Community Survey.

In addition to the unserved and underserved populations identified above, this assessment also gathered data and provided information on the anticipated vocational needs of incarcerated individuals with disabilities, older workers, veterans, those receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Co-location in Maine’s network of Department of Labor (MDOL) One-Stop CareerCenters has provided DVR the opportunity to work in partnership with a number of other programs that are components of the statewide workforce investment system and can support the employment of people with disabilities.

In October of 2010, DVR assisted MDOL’s Bureau of Employment Services in obtaining a Disability Employment Initiative Grant to continue work successfully started under Maine’s Disability Program Navigator Grant. Designed to promote employment through increased access to CareerCenter services and programs in targeted regions of the state, Maine’s DEI grant work includes increasing the number of CareerCenter locations that can accept Tickets and provide Employment Network services under Social Security’s Ticket to Work Program to beneficiaries. The CareerCenters also have a number of other employment programs that could serve people with disabilities, such as the Maine Job Bank, a new online accessible CareerCenter tool that allows jobseekers from around the state to be matched with real-time available positions. Although the CareerCenter data is reliant on self-disclosure of disability, participation by job seekers with disabilities is low among the MDOL programs with 6.6 percent of total Job Bank registrants and 3.2 percent of all individuals served under the Workforce Investment Act being identified as having a disability. Among those that exit CareerCenter services, the entered employment rate for individuals with disabilities is 66.7 percent - compared to 73.8 percent for public assistance recipients or 84 percent for veterans. Only older workers enter employment at a lower rate – 64.3 percent. Average earnings reveal a similar picture with individuals with disabilities earning only 7,325 dollars compared to 9,853 dollars for public assistance recipients or 12,401 dollars for veterans.

DVR’s assessment also considered the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) within the state and generally found that the vocational needs of DVR clients are being met although a joint DVR CRP project was underway at the time of this report to improve the employment outcomes of clients receiving CRP services. Surveys of VR counselors and CRPs did note the negative impact of high VR caseloads and hiring freezes on managing cases and supporting CRP referrals with informed client choice, as well as the inherent challenges of job placement in a large rural state during an economic recession. Ongoing professional development for CRPs was identified as important, including disability-specific training on autism, mental health, brain injury and deafness, and there were concerns voiced about insufficient CRP’s that are fluent in American Sign Language. The needs of employers were also considered, including their perceptions of how DVR and CRP services are beneficial in hiring and maintaining qualified workers with disabilities. Since DVR’s last statewide needs assessment, BRS has dedicated a half-time position to develop its relationships with employers and serve as the agency’s single point of contact.

In conclusion, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation completed a major initiative in 2010 to eliminate its waitlist for all individuals eligible for VR services. The significant unmet vocational needs of Mainers with disabilities identified in this Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment lends strong support to the importance of continued effort to sustain no waitlist and to further target several areas raised in this report, including:

• Review and improve use of resources with community rehabilitation providers to increase employment outcomes.

• Continue to work closely with partners at DHHS to provide employment services while people with intellectual disabilities are facing a waitlist for long term supports in work services.

• Continue to work collaboratively with the Department of Education to provide seamless transitions to employment as more and more students seek VR services as they enter adulthood.

• Continue to develop direct relationships with employers and business-to-business supports that result in successful models of employment for individuals with disabilities

• Maintain no waitlist, while continuing to address the high numbers of individuals in Plan Development (Status 10), and focus on those who drop out of the program, including how we can better keep people engaged in the VR program once they have developed a plan.

• Closely monitor financial and human resources in order to continue to maintain no waitlist for services.

The full Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment 2013 – 2015 can be accessed at <http://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/attach.php?id=371050&an=2>

* **Attachment 4.11(b) Annual Estimates**
* Identify the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services.
* Identify the number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds under:
  + Part B of Title I;
  + Part B of Title VI;
  + each priority category, if under an order of selection.
* Identify the cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

**Attachment 4.11(b) Annual Estimates**

Identify the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services.

In the comprehensive needs assessment completed for the 2013 State Plan, the estimated number of individuals eligible for services based on the American Community Survey of 2010 was 73,000 DVR-eligible adults in Maine. This data, from the ACS, was most recently updated in 010.

Identify the number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds under:

o Part B of Title I;

o Part B of Title VI;

o each priority category, if under an order of selection.

Part B of Title I

The FFY 2013 projection for Maine DVR was 3,700 new applicants, with 3,000 individuals to become eligible for services. Maine anticipated that 1,500 clients will develop Individualized Plans for Employment and projects more than 900 employment closures.

In FFY 2013, Maine processed 3,908 new applicants, found 3,255 individuals eligible, wrote 1,969 plans, and closed 921 clients in employment. DVR served 9,503 clients with $7,381,935 (Total case service expenditures from the RSA-2. 110 & VI-B funds) in Title I funds.

Each priority category, if under an order of selection.

This is the third full federal fiscal year Maine DVR was able to serve all eligible consumers.

In FFY 2013, Maine’s Employment closures, by Order of Selection category:

• 419 clients or 45 percent were most significantly disabled;

• 349 clients or 38 percent were significantly disabled; and

• 153 clients or 17 percent were disabled.

In the previous fiscal year, 2012:

• 458 clients or 59 percent were most significantly disabled;

• 182 clients or 23 percent were significantly disabled; and

• 138 clients or 18 percent were disabled.

Average expenditure per client closed in FFY 2014 is estimated to be: $2,000. The proposed case service budget is $8,400,000. The actual expenditures for cases closed in 2013 were $7,381,935 with the average case cost of $1815.

For FY 2014 the projections are 4,000 applicants, with 3,300individuals being found eligible for services. The projection for new plans is 2000 with 1,000 successful outcomes.

Maine plans to serve individuals in all three priority categories in FFY 2014. The projected number of clients to receive services after being found eligible is 9,000; 5,000 will be served under an employment plan. The expected services provision by priority category is as follows:

**OOS CATEGORY PERCENT INDIVIDUALS**

**All served /With IPE**

1 50 4,500/2,500

2 30 2,700/1,500

3 20 1,800/1,000

As of this report date Maine DVR continues to serve all eligible clients. In terms of employment outcomes for FFY 2014, DVR is projecting 1,000 employment closures as follows;

**SUCCESSFUL CLOSURES**

OOS 1 50 percent 500

OOS 2 30 percent 300

OOS 3 20 percent 200

**IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY**

Maine continues serving individuals in all three priority categories during FFY 2014 as stated above; the projected number of clients to receive services after being found eligible is 9,000. With a case service budget of $8,400,000 the expected services provision by priority category is as follows:

**OOS CATEGORY PERCENT CLIENTS DOLLARS**

1 50 4500 $4,200,000

2 30 2700 $2,520,000

3 20 1800 $1,680,000

**FFY 2015**

As of this report date Maine DVR continues to serve all eligible clients. In terms of employment outcomes for FFY 2015, DVR is projecting 1,100 employment closures as follows;

**SUCCESSFUL CLOSURES**

OOS 1 50 percent 550

OOS 2 30 percent 330

OOS 3 20 percent 220

Maine will continue to serve individuals in all three priority categories during FFY 2015.

As stated above, the projected number of clients to receive services after being found eligible is 10,000. With a case service budget of 8,400,000 dollars, the expected services provision by priority category is as follows:

**OOS CATEGORY PERCENT CLIENTS DOLLARS**

1 50 5000 $4,200,000

2 30 3000 $2,520,000

3 20 2000 $1,680,000

**PART B OF TITLE VI**

The Division received $252,000 in Title VI-B Grant funds and $13,150,933 in Title I funds for the FY2013 grant. In FFY 2013 DVR closed 129 Supported Employment cases; 45 with an employment outcome.

It is expected that Maine DVR will serve 110 individuals with Title VI funds and at least another 30 with Title I funds. The number served with Title I funds has been stable over the past 3 years.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Title I or Title VI** | **Estimated Funds** | **Estimated Number to be Served** | **Average Cost of Services** |
| FFY 2014, Part B Title I: OOS #1 | Title I | $4,200,000 | 4500 | $933 |
| FFY 2013, Part B Title I: OOS #2 | Title I | $2,520,000 | 2700 | $933 |
| FFY 2013, Part B Title I: OOS #3 | Title I | $1,680,000 | 1800 | $933 |
| FFY 2013, Part B Title VI | Title VI | $252,000 | 110 | $2,290 |
| FFY 2013, Part B Title I (supported employment) | Title I | $396,373 | 30 | $13,212 |
|  |  |  |  | — |
|  |  |  |  | — |
|  |  |  |  | — |
|  |  |  |  | — |
|  |  |  |  | — |
| Totals |  | $9,048,373 | 8,140 | $1,111 |

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

The goals and priorities are based on the comprehensive statewide assessment, on requirements related to the performance standards and indicators, and on other information about the state agency. (See section 101(a)(15)(C) of the Act.) This attachment should be updated when there are material changes in the information that require the description to be amended.

* Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.
* Identify if the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, jointly reviewed the goals and priorities and jointly agreed to any revisions.
* Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.
* Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
  + the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
  + the performance of the state on standards and indicators; and
  + other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

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

**MAINE DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION GOALS 2013-2015**

Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.

Maine DVR, in concert with the DVR SRC, developed a plan to assess the VR needs in Maine. This included information from a facilitated public forum at the 2012 annual meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council to solicit constructive feedback from current and former clients of Maine DVR. Although DVR and the SRC followed a similar process to how feedback was sought during the previous year, only five members of the community attended and one gave verbal feedback to the VR program.

The SRC also provided questions asked in Maine’s 2011 consumer satisfaction survey conducted by Market Decisions, LLC. This is the fourth consumer satisfaction survey conducted by Market Decisions since 2003. The SRC has provided and approved "the state specific" questions.

• Identify if the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, jointly reviewed the goals and priorities and jointly agreed to any revisions.

The SRC reviewed the Comprehensive Needs assessment in March 2012 and were invited to develop goals and strategies to gaps in the system and services to un- served and underserved individuals.

• Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

**Maine DVR’s Goals Fiscal Years 2013 - 2015**

**Goal 1**

To increase successful closures for DVR clients from 705 in FFY 2011 to 800 in FFY 2012 and 900 in FFY 2013, 1000 in 2014 and 1100 in 2015; thereby substantially improving employment outcomes for DVR clients in Maine.

(This goal is modified from an original projected goal of 1000 in FFY 2013 and 1100 in FY 2014. While the revised goals are still ambitious, they reflect the projected impact of fiscal limitations at the state and federal level – including sequestration.)

**Goal 2**

To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner including maintenance of no waitlist for services during the period FFY 2012 – 2015

**Goal 3**

To ensure that individuals with disabilities who may be unserved or underserved or who have minority status have access to DVR services, Maine DVR will increase the numbers of individuals with disabilities from racial and minority groups from 3.2 percent in FY 2011 to meet the federal standard as determined by RSA’s Indicator 2.1 RSA is looking at the proportion of minorities who receive services compared to the ratio of non-minorities served. The Federal standard is 0.80 or greater

(This goal was modified this year to determine progress through the use of RSA’s standards and indicators instead of measuring against the ACS survey which is less frequently updated.)

**Goal 4**

Maine DVR will partner with the larger workforce development system to improve opportunities and access for DVR clients as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, technical assistance, and training.

• Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:

The most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;

Maine DVR completed its comprehensive needs assessment and presented it to the State Rehabilitation Council March 15, 2012 for comment. Maine DVR’s Goals for FY 2013 - 2015, include measurable outcomes for 2012 goals that are presently in progress.

The performance of the state on standards and indicators; and

Standards and Indicators are tracked on a quarterly basis and the new MaineAWARE case management system software enables Maine DVR to track in real time if needed. This is done and reported out to the Bureau Lead Team staff, as well as Regional managers, so that all are aware of how DVR is are doing in meeting these specific goals.

Other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under Section 107.

Reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council

No recommendations from SRC to DVR in their 2013 Annual Report.

## Attachment 4.11(c)(3) Order of Selection - Identify the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services.

* Identify the justification for the order.
* Identify the service and outcome goals.
* Identify the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
* Describe how individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities.

#### Justification for order of selection

On October 1, 2010 Maine DVR eliminated its wait list and began serving all eligible applicants.

As of October 1, 2012 DVR is no longer under an Order of Selection.

DVR continues to monitor the number of individuals in all statuses on a monthly basis.

The OOS definitions remain in DVR rules should the need arise to reinstate an order of selection. At this time, all applicants are assigned to an OOS category to ensure that DVR continues to serve the most significantly disabled. This was upon the advice of RSA staff during the 2011 107 Monitoring review.

#### Description of Priority categories

The priority category shall be assigned, based on their level of significance of disability; "Level of significance of disability" means one of the following:

• Priority Category 1, "most significantly disabled";

• Priority Category 2, "significantly disabled"; or

• Priority Category 3, "disabled" as set forth below.

Individuals with disabilities shall be served first based on significance of disability and second by date of application in the following priority order:

A. Priority Category 1, "Most significantly disabled" means an eligible individual who meets the following criteria:

(1) who has a serious limitation in terms of an employment outcome in four or more functional capacity areas. Functional capacity areas are; mobility, work tolerance, communication, self-care, interpersonal skills, cognition and learning (self- direction), or work skills. "Serious limitation in terms of an employment outcome" means a reduction of one’s capacity to perform, due to severe physical or mental impairment, to the degree that the individual requires services or accommodations in order for the individual to work or be a fully functioning member of the community; and

(2) whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services, meaning two or more core vocational rehabilitation services as outlined in Section 9 of this rule, services 9.1 through 9.14; and

(3) whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require an extended period of time.

B. Priority Category 2, "Significantly disabled" means an eligible individual who meets the following criteria:

(1) who has a serious limitation in terms of an employment outcome in at least two or three functional capacity areas. Functional capacity areas are; mobility, work tolerance, communication, self-care, interpersonal skills, cognition and learning (self- direction), or work skills. "Serious limitation in terms of an employment outcome" means a reduction of one’s capacity to perform, due to severe physical or mental impairment, to the degree that the individual requires services or accommodations in order for the individual to work or be a fully functioning member of the community; and

(2) whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services, meaning two or more core vocational rehabilitation services as outlined in Section 9 of this rule, services 9.1 through 9.14; and

(3) whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require an extended period of time; and

(4) who has one or more physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, acquired traumatic brain injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, HIV infection, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, mental retardation, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, musculo-skeletal disorders, neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), spinal cord conditions (including paraplegia and quadriplegia), sickle cell anemia, specific learning disability, end-stage renal disease, or another disability or combination of disabilities determined on the basis of an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs to cause comparable substantial functional limitation.

C. Priority Category 3, "Disabled" means an eligible individual who has:

(1) a serious limitation in terms of an employment outcome in 1 or more functional capacity areas. Functional capacity areas are; mobility, work tolerance, communication, self-care, interpersonal skills, cognition and learning (self- direction), or work skills. "Serious limitation in terms of an employment outcome" means a reduction of one’s capacity to perform, due to severe physical or mental impairment, to the degree that the individual requires services or accommodations in order for the individual to work or be a fully functioning member of the community; and

(2) whose vocational rehabilitation may or may not require multiple core vocational rehabilitation services as outlined in Section 9 of this rule, services 9.1 through 9.14; or

(3) whose vocational rehabilitation may or may not require an extended period of time

4. Individuals Not Meeting the Order of Selection Criteria

#### Priority of categories to receive VR services under the order

On October 1, 2010 Maine DVR eliminated its wait list. Priority is assigned through date of application and determination of eligibility for services.

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

Specify the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under section 622 of the Act for the provision of supported employment services.

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

Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation’s (DVR) Statewide Needs Assessment and surveys conducted throughout FY 2011 addressed the needs and gaps for all individuals who could be found eligible for VR services. The following goals developed for 2013 -2015 have objectives and strategies for individuals supported under the Title VI grant.

**Goal 1**

To increase successful closures for DVR clients from 705 in FFY 2011 to 800 in FFY 2012 and 900 in FFY 2013, 1000 in 2014, and 1100 in 2015; thereby substantially improving employment outcomes for DVR clients in Maine

Objective: To increase the numbers of successful employment closures for individuals who receive services from community rehabilitation providers from 385 in FFY 2011 to 400 in FFY 2012 to 450 in FY 2013 (Discontinued)

New Objective: To increase the percentage of successful employment closures for individuals who receive services from community rehabilitation providers.

**Strategies:**

a. Convene CRP project group to develop and implement recommendations on improving CRP delivered services.

b. Provide joint training opportunities for CRP’s on topics to promote best practices in employment supports for people with disabilities.

c. DVR will work with the Maine Center on Deafness in identifying and training individuals with native ASL skills as employment specialists.

**Goal 2**

To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner, including maintenance of no waitlist for services during the period FFY 2012 – 2015

Objective: To increase the number of individuals with significant intellectual disabilities who access long-term support funding needed for successful employment from 1700 in FFY 2011 to 1750 in FFY 2012 to 1800 in FFY 2013 (Discontinued in 2013)

**New Objective for 2014:** To increase the number of individuals with significant intellectual disabilities who access the available waiver employment support for long term employment support needs after closure from BRS by 50 people during FFY 2013.

The above objective is being added due to the wait list at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Aging and Disability Services (DHHS-OADS)

**Strategies:**

a. Continue to work in collaboration with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to address the significant waitlist for employment waiver services

b. Continue to work with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that all individuals who have the waiver – but have not taken advantage of employment services – are aware of employment supports open to them through coordination between the two Departments.

c. Complete and pilot the recently developed Career Exploration Workshop appropriate for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

**Goal 3**

To ensure that individuals with disabilities who may be unserved or underserved or who have minority status have access to DVR services, Maine DVR will increase the numbers of individuals with disabilities from racial and minority groups from 3.2% in FY 2011 to meet the federal standard as determined by RSA’ s Indicator 2.1 RSA is looking at the proportion of minorities who receive services compared to the ratio of non-minorities served. The Federal standard is 0.80 or greater.

Objective and Strategies: Maine DVR will undertake efforts to embrace and implement an “Employment First” philosophy during the next two years as documented by numbers of individuals and organizations participating in the Alliance for Full Participation and activities undertaken.

## Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies

This attachment should include required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the vocational rehabilitation and the supported employment programs. (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Act and Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)).

Describe the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

**Attachment 4.11(d) State’s Strategies**

These Goals, Objectives and Strategies to attain 2013-2015 goals developed based on the recommendations from the 2011 Statewide Needs Assessment

**Goal 1**

To increase successful closures for DVR clients from 705 in FFY 2011 to 800 in FFY 2012 and 900 in FFY 2013, 1000 in 2014, and 1100 in 2015; thereby substantially improving employment outcomes for DVR clients in Maine

**Objective:** Reduction of the numbers of DVR clients who “drop out” of services from 1627 in FFY 2011 to 1500 in FFY 2012 to 1300 in FY 2013 (continued for 2014 & 2015)

**Strategies:**

a. Collect and analyze data on reasons for drop out for cases closed in status 30/found eligible no plan developed.

b. Provide staff training on case management techniques that promote engagement.

**Objective:** To increase the numbers of successful employment closures for individuals who receive services from community rehabilitation providers from 385 in FFY 2011 to 400 in FFY 2012 to 450 in FY 2013. (This objective will be discontinued and will be updated for 2015)

**(New Objective for FY2015):** To increase the percentage of successful employment closures for individuals who receive services from community rehabilitation providers.

**Strategies:**

a. Convene CRP project group to develop and implement recommendations on improving CRP delivered services (completed and discontinued)

b. Provide joint training opportunities for CRP’s on topics to promote best practices in employment supports for people with disabilities.

c. (New Strategy for 2015) Monitor data on the implementation of the Milestone Outcome Payment System for quality assurance

**Updated Objective:** To expand the number of Maine employers who implement diversity hiring activities through engagement with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services’ Business Services Hiring Initiative Team from two in FFY 2011 to four in FFY 2012 to six in FY 2013 to twelve in FY 2014 to sixteen in FY 2015

**Strategies:**

a. (**Updated Strategy for 2015**) Continue to actively support the Maine Chapter of the US Business Leadership Network

b. **(Updated Strategy for 2015)** Partner with the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, local Chambers, and the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) to expand business outreach/network

c. **(Updated Strategy for 2015)** With input from field staff (VRCs and CRPs), develop Regional Business Relations Plans for each region. These plans will clearly identify roles, responsibilities, and strategies to engage business partners in the field.

d. **(New Strategy for 2015)** Participate with other MDOL programs to pilot a sector strategy to respond to workforce needs in health care. A major emphasis is on the development of a Maine Health Care Academy to train job seekers for CNAs and/or nursing positions.

**Goal 2**

To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner including maintenance of no waitlist for services during the period FFY 2012 – 2015

**Objective:** To reduce the average time in plan development (status 10) from 300 days in FFY 2011 to 240 days in FFY 2012 to 210 days in FY 2013 to 180 days in FY 2014 & FY 2015

**Strategies:**

a. Increase use of the Career Exploration Workshop, which has been shown to decrease case length time

b. Work closely with the Maine Department of Education to ensure implementation of the joint Cooperative Agreement and best practice guidelines on referral and timely application for transition age students

c. Deliver staff training and supervision on best practices in IPE plan development

**Objective:** To increase the number of individuals with significant intellectual disabilities who have access to long-term support funding needed for successful employment from 1700 in FFY 2011 to 1750 in FFY 2012 to 1800 in FFY 2013 (Discontinued in FFY 2013)

**New Objective for 2014:** To increase the number of individuals with significant intellectual disabilities who access the available waiver employment support for long term employment support needs after closure from BRS by 50 people during FFY 2013.

The above objective is being added due to the wait list at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Aging and Disability Services (DHHS-OADS)

**Strategies:**

a. Continue to work in collaboration with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to address the significant waitlist for employment waiver services

b. Continue to work with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that all individuals who have the waiver – but have not taken advantage of employment services – are aware of employment supports open to them through coordination between the two Departments

c. Complete and pilot the recently developed Career Exploration Workshop appropriate for individuals with intellectual disabilities

**Goal 3**

To ensure that individuals with disabilities who may be unserved or underserved or who have minority status have access to DVR services, Maine DVR will increase the numbers of individuals with disabilities from racial and minority groups from 3.2 percent in FY 2011 to meet the federal standard as determined by RSA’ s Indicator 2.1 RSA is looking at the proportion of minorities who receive services compared to the ratio of non-minorities served. The Federal standard is 0.80 or greater

**Objective:** Maine DVR will work closely with Maine’s Section 121 VR Grant – Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation, to increase co-enrollment from no one co-enrolled in FY 2011 to four in FY 2012, six in FY 2013, eight in FY 2014, and 10 in FY 2015

**Strategies:**

a. Maine DVR will include Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation in training and technical assistance opportunities.

b. Wabanaki VR will provide technical assistance to Maine DVR on issues related to cultural competency and best practices in Native employment supports.

c. According to the joint MOU, Maine DVR and Wabanaki VR will meet at least annually to review the agreement.

**Objective:** Maine DVR will collect data on the numbers of individuals served – belonging to the following categories in FY 2012 to establish a baseline and future goals:

a. individuals involved with the correctional system

b. individuals who are veterans

c. individuals who are “older workers”

d. individuals who are “New Mainers”

**Strategies:**

a. Maine DVR will develop and utilize special indicators in its case management system to track individuals who belong to one of the above groups.

b. DVR will ensure that all materials distributed or published by the agency will be accessible and demonstrate cultural competency.

c. **(New Strategy for 2015)** Maine DVR will complete a new video “Orientation to VR Services” in conjunction with the Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the New England TACE.

**Updated Objective:** Maine DVR will undertake efforts to embrace and implement an “Employment First” philosophy during the next two years as documented by numbers of individuals and organizations participating in Employment First Coalition and its workgroups and activities undertaken.

**Objective:** Maine DVR will increase the numbers of individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing who are served by DVR in the Northern and Western regions of the state.

**Strategies:**

* 1. DVR will hire two additional Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf

**New Objective for 2015:** Maine DVR will work to ensure statewide consistency in its practices with regard to “Clubhouses” offering services to DVR clients as measured by client case review.

**Strategies**:

1. DVR will establish a liaison to the local Clubhouse in each office.
2. DVR will invite Clubhouse program staff to participate in DVR training opportunities.

**Goal 4**

Maine DVR will partner with the larger workforce development system to improve opportunities and access for DVR clients as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, technical assistance, and training.

**Objective:** Maine DVR will partner with Maine’s Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Grant to increase the numbers of non-VR CareerCenter customers with disabilities who participate in Career Exploration Workshops from 3 in FY 2011 to 10 in FY 2012 to 25 in FY 2013

**Strategies:**

a. (Updated for 2014/5) The DEI team will include one VR Rehabilitation Counselor I who will assist in delivering the CEW.

b. DVR will participate in DEI Integrated Resource Team meetings

c. DVR will work with the DEI team and others in the Bureau of Employment Services to ensure accessibility in Maine’s CareerCenter network

**Objective:** Maine DVR will work with the Bureau of Labor Standards to support integrated competitive community-based employment of people with disabilities by a review and examination of organizations paying sub-minimum wage in Maine with the goal of reducing these certificates from 17 in FY 2011 to 15 in FY 2012 to 13 in FY 2013

**Objective:** Maine DVR will use the resources of the Maine Department of Labor’s Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) to increase the use of labor market information among DVR Counselors from undetermined in FY 2011 to determining a baseline in FY 2012 to an increase of 10% usage in FY 2013

**Strategies:**

a. DVR will engage CWRI to offer training to DVR staff on use of current labor market information and tools

b. **(Updated Strategy)** DVR will work with CWRI to develop a triennial snapshot of the employment status of people with disabilities in Maine as well as a webpage where disability data can be easily accessed.

**Objective:** Maine DVR will develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the public Worker’s Compensation system in order to better serve Maine workers who are in need of rehabilitation services and to increase the number served from 54 in FY 2011 to 70 in FY 2012 to 100 in FY 2013

**Strategies:**

a. Convene a workgroup made up of representatives of the Workers’ Compensation system and Maine DVR to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (Met and Discontinued)

b. DVR will hire three Rehabilitation Counselor II’s to serve specialty Workers’ Compensation caseloads

c. DVR will meet at least annually with the Workers’ Compensation Board to assess the success of the MOU initiative.

**(New Objective for 2015):** DVR will explore opportunities for new grants to support the mission of BRS. During 2015, DVR will apply for at least two new grant opportunities.

**Identify how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process; and describe how assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis.**

Assistive technology services and assistive technology devices are provided to individuals with disabilities as determined by each individual’s vocational goal, and appear as prescribed services on the respective individual’s signed IPE. DVR services include assistive technology and assistive technology devices if required for the individual’s IPE, necessary for the attainment of the individual’s employment goal. DVR works closely with Maine cohorts, Alpha One and ALLTECH, assistive technology organizations which provide assistive technology technical assistance services as well as assistive technology devices.

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

#### Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) Goals

1. Clearly identify all VR program goals consistent with the goals described in the FY 2012 Attachment 4.11(c)(1), including an evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals were achieved.

* Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
* Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

**Attachment 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) Goals**

**Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Goals 2013-2015 as stated in FY 2013 Plan.**

These Goals, Objectives and Strategies to attain 2013-2015 goals developed based on the recommendations from the 2011 Statewide Needs Assessment

**Goal 1**

To increase successful closures for DVR clients from 705 in FFY 2011 to 800 in FFY 2012 and 900 in FFY 2013 and 1000 in 2014; thereby substantially improving employment outcomes for DVR clients in Maine

This goal was modified to reflect the impact of fiscal cuts at the federal level through sequestration as well as continued state level budgetary pressures. The projected outcomes continue to be ambitious however.

**Objective:** Reduction of the numbers of DVR clients who “drop out” of services from 1627 in FFY 2011 to 1500 in FFY 2012 to 1300 in FY 2013

**Strategies:**

Collect and analyze data on reasons for drop out for cases closed in status 30/found eligible no plan developed.

Provide staff training on case management techniques that promote engagement.

**REPORT ON PROGRESS:**

DVR will continue to work on addressing reasons for drop out this year as FY 2013 figures revealed that the numbers of clients who exited before plan development increased this year to 1580. Through case review, and the upcoming triennial customer satisfaction survey, DVR will gather information about the reasons for drop out. Based on this feedback, DVR will examine policies and practices and will conduct training to strengthen VRC skills if indicated.

**Objective:** To increase the numbers of successful employment closures for individuals who receive services from community rehabilitation providers from 385 in FFY 2011 to 400 in FFY 2012 to 450 in FY 2013

**Strategies:**

Convene CRP project group to develop and implement recommendations on improving CRP delivered services

Provide joint training opportunities for CRP’s on topics to promote best practices in employment supports for people with disabilities.

**REPORT ON PROGRESS:** During FY 2013, 512 cases were closed successfully that had received services from community rehabilitation providers. Thanks to the work of the Community Rehabilitation Provider Project over the course of the last two years, a number of changes have been made to how Maine DVR works with CRPs. These changes have impacted every element of the CRP relationship with DVR from increased joint training opportunities to new referral forms to accreditation of CRPs to the most significant change – the roll out statewide of an outcome payment system. Early data is showing cost saving and increased outcomes due to the change to an outcome payment system.

Many joint trainings were offered to CRP’s and in addition Maine’s workforce development system for employment service providers which offered Webinars from October 2013 – February 2014 included the following topics: Maine's Workforce Development System: Opportunities and Needs, 58 participants, The Maine DD Council's New Employment Initiative: An Overview of the Newly Funded Projects with 33 participants, How Will the New Person Centered Planning Process Support Employment for People with Developmental Disabilities? Over 81 participants registered, Employment Readiness Scale had 67 people registered, and Webinar #5, A Community Conversation is scheduled for April 2014 and currently has 58 registrations. Participation in these webinars continues to grow from 20 to over 80 registrants.

**Objective:** To expand the number of Maine employers who implement diversity hiring activities through engagement with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services’ Business Services Hiring Initiative Team from two in FFY 2011 to four in FFY 2012 to six in FY 2013

**Strategies**:

Support the re-establishment of a Maine Chapter of the US Business Leadership Network

Partner with the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) to expand business outreach/network

Identify and train local VR and CRP personnel to coordinate referrals and start up activities for new business partners, in each region of the state

**REPORT ON PROGRESS:**

Despite fluctuating staffing, Maine DVR has continued to move forward on development of its business relations model. Contact and partnership discussions were initiated with 65 companies. DVR’s most active/engaged partnerships include Procter & Gamble/Tambrands, Bank of America, Cianbro, General Dynamics/Bath Iron Works, CVS/Caremark, Eastern Maine Medical Center, Duck Trap River, Jackson Labs, L.L. Bean, Longhorns’ Steakhouse, ME General Hospital, N.H. Bragg, New Balance, Pine State Tobacco, Lowes and Walgreens.

**Goal 2**

To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner including maintenance of no waitlist for services during the period FFY 2012 – 2015

**Objective:** To reduce the average time in plan development (status 10) from 300 days in FFY 2011 to 240 days in FFY 2012 to 210 days in FY 2013 to 180 days in FY 2014

**Strategies:**

a. Increase use of the Career Exploration Workshop, which has been shown to decrease case length time.

b. Work closely with the Maine Department of Education to ensure implementation of the joint Cooperative Agreement and best practice guidelines on referral and timely application for transition age students

c. Deliver staff training and supervision on best practices in IPE plan development

**REPORT ON PROGRESS:**

The Career Exploration Workshop has become an accepted tool to assist Maine DVR clients in all offices. Recently pulled data shows that CEW is having an impact on the rehabilitation rate of clients – particularly transition age clients where those who participated in the CEW had a 7 % higher rehabilitation rate. Maine DVR convenes both a quarterly CEW facilitators group and a quarterly CEW steering group to provide quality assurance and fidelity to the CEW model.

Following further analysis, DVR’s “average days in plan development for 2012” was corrected to 294, not the 235 reported last year. During FY 2013 these numbers again remained flat with time in plan development at 299 days. DVR will examine this issue closely and will seek out effective practices from other state VR agencies to continue to push to reduce this figure.

Maine DVR works very closely with the Maine Department of Education to ensure timely referrals. Through MDOE sponsored trainings and regional groups, Maine DVR has had the opportunity to reinforce the message that the best time for referrals to DVR is two years before high school graduation or exit. Due to staff turnover in the field this is an area that needs regular attention.

To continue to strengthen employment plan development, casework supervisors regularly review open cases as well as meet with VRCs to provide guidance on appropriate plan development. New Counselor Training includes a module on plan development and all VRCs who would like to brush up on their plan development skills are welcome to attend along with new counselors when it is offered during the year.

**-Objective:** To increase the number of individuals with significant intellectual disabilities who have access to long-term support funding needed for successful employment from 1700 in FFY 2011 to 1750 in FFY 2012 to 1800 in FFY (objective discontinued – FY 2013)

**New Objective for 2014:** To increase the number of individuals with significant intellectual disabilities who access the available waiver employment support for long term employment support needs after closure from BRS by 50 people during FFY 2013.

The above objective is being added due to the wait list at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Aging and Disability Services (DHHS-OADS)

**Strategies:**

a. Continue to work in collaboration with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to address the significant waitlist for employment waiver services

b. Continue to work with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that all individuals who have the waiver – but have not taken advantage of employment services – are aware of employment supports open to them through coordination between the two Departments.

c. Complete and pilot the recently developed Career Exploration Workshop appropriate for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

**REPORT ON PROGRESS :**

The Career Exploration Workshop (CEW) curriculum (The Bridge – Pathways to Employment) designed for individuals with intellectual disabilities was developed as a follow-up to DVR’s successful CEW utilized with a general adult population. The Bridge curriculum was developed by a number of stakeholders including individuals with intellectual disabilities. Following extensive research, the Picture Interest Career Survey (Robert Brady) was chosen to be used as the main formal assessment tool with the curriculum. The use of the curriculum supports the updates to the 1915 (c) waiver (2011) in regard to focusing on the importance of competitive, integrated work for people with disabilities. The curriculum can be conducted within a small group format over a period of approximately 40 plus hours, including preparation time, though individual activities may also be utilized in a one on one situation. It reinforces best practices by promoting self-direction and peer support regarding career planning. Peer support is a powerful tool in regard to best practices regarding success in the world of employment and in the world, in general.  The CEW for people with intellectual disabilities focuses on the individual and person centered planning toward the achievement of employment outcomes. Achieving meaningful work supports true community integration and is associated with positive mental and physical health benefits. The CEW also can be used in Community supports Programs as a curriculum to build the skills necessary for an individual to transition to employment.

In collaboration with the Office of Adults with Intellectual Disabilities (DHHS), reimbursement to day habilitation and community rehabilitation providers programs was approved through waiver funding, making this career exploration workshop available to many more individuals who can benefit toward identifying their potential interest to work. As of  Spring 2014, DVR staff conducted over 25 “Train the Trainer” sessions to groups of staff involving school districts, day habilitation programs, case management programs, clubhouses, residential facilities, employment specialists/community rehabilitation provider agencies and BRS staff through  the state of Maine.  Additional trainings are planned for 2014.

**Goal 3**

To ensure that individuals with disabilities who may be unserved or underserved or who have minority status have access to DVR services, Maine DVR will increase the numbers of individuals with disabilities from racial and minority groups from 3.2% in FY 2011 to meet the federal standard as determined by RSA’ s Indicator 2.1 RSA is looking at the proportion of minorities who receive services compared to the ratio of non-minorities served. The Federal standard is 0.80 or greater

**Objective:** Maine DVR will work closely with Maine’s Section 121 VR Grant – Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation, to increase co-enrollment from no one co-enrolled in FY 2011 to four in FY 2012 , six in 2013.

**Strategies:**

a. Maine DVR will include Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation in training and technical assistance opportunities

b. Wabanaki VR will provide technical assistance to Maine DVR on issues related to cultural competency and best practices in Native employment supports

c. According to the joint MOU, Maine DVR and Wabanaki VR will meet at least annually to review the agreement

**REPORT ON PROGRESS:** Maine DVR worked closely with Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation during the year. All DVR-sponsored training were open to Wabanaki VR staff. They participated in many of them. Wabanaki VR also provided technical assistance to DVR through presentations at New Counselor Training.

The Director of the Section 121 Grant serves on the State Rehabilitation Council. DVR’s Business Relations Consultant has provided outreach to the Wabanaki VR program to ensure that individuals served by that program have access to employment opportunities developed with larger companies in northern Maine. During the reporting year, Maine DVR and Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation co-enrolled four (4) clients. Both programs value the partnership between the programs and continually review case sharing, training, and other issues to ensure optimal collaboration.

Maine DVR also has made gains on meeting the federal standard (RSA Indicator 2.1). RSA looks at the proportion of minorities who receive services compared to the ratio of non-minorities served. The Federal standard is 0.80 or greater. As of December, 2013 the Maine service rate for minorities was 0.967.

Objective: Maine DVR will collect data on the numbers of individuals served – belonging to the following categories in FY 2012 to establish a baseline and future goals:

a. individuals involved with the correctional system

b. individuals who are veterans

c. individuals who are “older workers”

d. individuals who are “New Mainers”

Strategies:

a. Maine DVR will develop and utilize special indicators in its case management system to track individuals who belong to one of the above groups.

b. DVR will ensure that all materials distributed or published by the agency will be accessible and demonstrate cultural competency.

**REPORT ON PROGRESS:**

Maine DVR continues to pay close attention to how it is serving many constituencies within the larger community of Maine residents with disabilities.

a. Individuals with a criminal history – Maine DVR has identified liaisons in each office to work with the correctional system and the liaisons meet as a group each quarter. Representatives of the correctional system also participate. Maine, like many states, continues to see increasing numbers of applicants who have criminal histories. Maine continues to promote training opportunities for staff to learn how best to develop employment plans with this population. In June of 2014, Maine DVR will host Gordon Swensen from Utah and Randy Loss from Pennsylvania as the keynote speakers at its statewide conference. Both men are experts on VR and corrections.

b. Veterans – Maine DVR served 118 identified veterans in 2012 - a number which increased to 136 in 2013. DVR has identified Veterans Liaisons in each of the larger offices. The Veterans Liaisons meet as a group several times per year. Maine DVR has a MOU with the Veterans Affairs – Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment services that outlines how the two agencies will work together to support veterans who are in need of vocational rehabilitation services. DVR also is strengthening relationships with USDOL’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Services (VETS) through at least annual opportunities for DVR and the Maine VETS team to meet together to increase cross-understanding of programs and services.

c. Older Workers – Maine DVR is serving a significant percentage of individuals who are considered “older workers”. In 2012, 20% of those served were age 55 or older (n=118). In 2013 this percentage inched up to 21% (n=857).

d. “New Mainers” – Maine has two large refugee resettlement communities. These communities may not have as great an understanding of vocational rehabilitation services. To supplement what local VR offices in those communities are doing, Maine DVR will host workshops during 2014 (including at its statewide conference) that will increase the cultural competence of staff. Maine DVR has reached out to the university system and other service providers for assistance in developing these training events.

**Objective:** Maine DVR will undertake efforts to embrace and implement an “Employment First” philosophy during the next two years as documented by numbers of individuals and organizations participating in the Alliance for Full Participation and activities undertaken

**REPORT ON PROGRESS:**

On June 22, 2013 Maine formally became an Employment First (EF) state when **Employment First Maine Act, LD 1352:** *An Act To Provide Integrated Community based Employment and Customized Employment for Persons with Disabilities* went into effect. Maine is only the second Employment First state to have both policy and law aspects and the only state to have both that addresses the needs of all individuals with disabilities. EFM is comprised of a wide range of members representing individuals with disabilities, including the statewide self-advocacy network, Speaking Up For Us (SUFU) and the Consumer Council System of Maine; family members; representatives of the Maine Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education; Maine APSE; providers; the Maine DD Council; Disability Rights Center; Alpha One; Syntiro, and others.

**Employment First Maine Act, LD 1352:** *An Act To Provide Integrated Community based Employment and Customized Employment for Persons with Disabilities*, requires that state agencies that provide or fund services and supports to persons with disabilities shall provide, as the first and priority service option, integrated, community-based and/or customized employment as a core component of the service delivery system. The Act requires all relevant state agencies (Education, Labor, Bureau of Employment Services and Vocational Rehabilitation), and DHHS (Medicaid, Aging and Disability and Substance Abuse and Mental Health) to coordinate their efforts and share data whenever possible in order to track progress. State agencies shall, when necessary, adopt rules and regulations to implement the Act to assure that employment is a core component of services.

**Employment First Maine Coalition**

The Act formally establishes the Employment First Maine Coalition, whose single purpose is to ensure implementation of the Act. The Coalition, chaired by Maine DVR Director Betsy Hopkins, will review measurable goals and objectives as submitted by each relevant state agency to ensure implementation of the Act. The Coalition will track the measurable progress of agencies in implementing the Act and prepare an annual report that details progress made toward the goals and objectives – as well as strategies, capacity-building activities and policies to help realize greatly improved employment outcomes for Maine citizens with disabilities. The EFM Coalition will serve as an advisory council to and oversight of, the implementation of this Act by Maine Departments of Education, HHS, and DOL. The Disability Rights Center, Maine’s Protection and Advocacy agency, has agreed to host Employment First Maine and provide accessible space, resources, staff support, and travel and accommodations for members with disabilities consistent with the priorities of their federally funded programs, for which employment is a priority. We have completed by-laws, establishing subcommittees to address capacity building, data, policies/rule changes, transition services, and communication that will assure Maine puts a system in place to realize the far-reaching goals established in the law.

**Objective:** Maine DVR will increase the numbers of individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing who are served by DVR in the Northern and Western regions of the state.

**Strategies:**

* 1. DVR will hire two additional Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf

**REPORT ON PROGRESS**:

Maine DVR was able to hire two additional Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf this past year. One of the RCDs in serving Western Maine and another is serving Northern Maine in an area that is particularly challenging due to limited ASL interpreter access. In FY 2012 – successful employment closures in these areas totaled 290. In FY 2013 – with the addition of new staff these numbers increased to 368.

**Goal 4**

Maine DVR will partner with the larger workforce development system to improve opportunities and access for DVR clients as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, technical assistance, and training.

**Objective:** Maine DVR will partner with Maine’s Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Grant to increase the numbers of non-VR CareerCenter customers with disabilities who participate in Career Exploration Workshops from 3 in FY 2011 to 10 in FY 2012 to 25 in FY 2013

**Strategies:**

a. The DEI team will include two VR Rehabilitation Counselor I’s who will assist in delivering the CEW.

b. DVR will participate in DEI Integrated Resource Team meetings

c. DVR will work with the DEI team and others in the Bureau of Employment Services to ensure accessibility in Maine’s CareerCenter network

**REPORT ON PROGRESS:** During the past fiscal year, Round One of the DEI grant (which included funding for two VR Rehabilitation Counselor I’s wrapped up and during the summer of 2013, DVR assisted the Bureau of Employment Services to write a grant proposal for the next round of DEI grants. Maine was awarded Round 4 DEI funding beginning in October 2013. Due to the smaller location of the targeted service area (Maine’s Local Workforce Investment Area Three), only one DVR Rehabilitation Counselor I was written into the grant proposal. Round 4 will build on the successful work of Round One. The newly hired RCI has been trained on the Career Exploration Workshop curriculum and will be assisting to deliver the curriculum in the three VR offices in the Round Four catchment area.

During Round One DEI assisted over 250 customers with gap funding (or resources) that helped them to obtain or maintain employment. Of this number, 90% were already in the Maine Job Bank and One-Stop-Operating System (OSOS) tracking system. 80% of those had not disclosed a disability previously even though they had already completed OSOS data entry. Disability Resource Coordinators and Rehabilitation Counselor I’s updated the data in OSOS and this immediately increased the number of persons with disabilities served significantly. Participation in Integrated Resource Team meetings and the Flexible Employment Fund offered DEI clients the opportunity to learn more about Ticket to Work, VR, and other Job Center and community resources. TriCounty CareerCenter in Bangor served 131 clients with FEF funding assistance and the Presque Isle site has served 121 clients.

**Objective:** Maine DVR will work with the Bureau of Labor Standards to support integrated competitive community-based employment of people with disabilities by a review and examination of organizations paying sub-minimum wage in Maine with the goal of reducing these certificates from 17 in FY 2011 to 15 in FY 2012 to 13 in FY 2013

**REPORT ON PROGRESS:** There are currently 11 organizations that hold sub-minimum wage certificates. While this progress is very positive, through the work of Maine’s Employment First initiative and through partnership with the Bureau of Labor Standards, Maine DVR will continue to promote the message that individuals with disabilities should be supported to be working in integrated competitive community-based employment.

**Objective:** Maine DVR will use the resources of the Maine Department of Labor’s Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) to increase the use of labor market information among DVR Counselors from undetermined in FY 2011 to determining a baseline in FY 2012 to an increase of 10% usage in FY 2013

**Strategies:**

a. DVR will engage CWRI to offer training to DVR staff on use of current labor market information and tools

b. DVR will work with CWRI to develop an annual snapshot of the employment status of people with disabilities in Maine

**REPORT ON PROGRESS:** DVR has worked closely over the last year to develop a number of tools that will positively impact the way that data is used to inform policy decisions as well as to strengthen development of individual employment plans for clients. CWRI is currently developing a web page to post Maine’s disability and employment data. The intent would be for CWRI to annually update the information available there. Every three years CWRI will publish a more extensive document “Snapshot: Maine Workers with Disabilities”.

During 2014-15, Maine DVR will explore opportunities to offer training on the new website and other CWRI labor market information for DVR staff.

Objective: Maine DVR will develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the public Workers’ Compensation system in order to better serve Maine workers who are in need of rehabilitation services and increase the number served from 54 in FY 2011 to 70 in FY 2012 to 100 in FY 2013

**Strategies:**

a. Convene a workgroup made up of representatives of the Workers’ Compensation system and Maine DVR to develop a Memorandum of Understanding

**REPORT ON PROGRESS:** Maine completed a MOU with the Workers Compensation Board in October 2012. In the subsequent months DVR hired two VR Counselors for the Workers Compensation initiative. In keeping with the WCB’s requirements, both VRC’s were CRC’s. One VRC was a retired VR supervisor and the other was a former VRC who had recently been working in private vocational rehabilitation. The second VRC transferred to the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired in January 2014 and the position remains open at this time despite multiple postings. In September of 2013, WCB leadership met with DVR leadership and the WCB team and reviewed first year outcomes. They included 41 referrals for initial evaluation and approximately $30,000 in billing.

***2. Identify all supported employment program goals consistent with the goals described in Attachment 4.11(c)(4), including an evaluation of the extent to which the supported employment program goals were achieved.***

***• Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.***

***• Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.***

***Provide an Assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY 2012.***

Maine DVR again met five of the performance indicators in Standard 1. Rehabilitation Rate 1.2 was the unmet standard still below Federal minimum but improved from the previous year. Standard 1.1 and 1.2 are monitored monthly; all standards are monitored quarterly.

***Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.***

**State Independent Living Council (SILC)**

To assist the SILC to increase organizational capacity and member effectiveness, Maine DVR supported the SILC this year to hire an Executive Director to envision and articulate the organization’s goals and establish the systems and mechanisms to achieve these goals. The SILC Executive Director will be responsible for conducting the work of the SPIL under the supervision and direction of the Maine SILC to accomplish tasks such as a) recruitment and management of members and volunteers b) establish and maintain partnerships with community members and organizations c) market and promote the Maine SILC d) increase and diversify the resources related to the six core areas of the SILC.

**State Rehabilitation Council Support**

Innovation & Expansion funds are used to support the activities and administration of the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Division and the SRC meets monthly as a full council. The SRC has standing committees that meet regularly. These committees include, DVR/SRC Policy Group, CSPD Subcommittee, Membership, Annual Meeting, Website committee, and the Executive Committee.

For more information regarding the SRC, please visit www.mainesrc.org. At its annual meeting in September 2013 the SRC benefited from the New England Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE) facilitators. TACE successfully facilitated the SRC annual meeting as TACE staff understood not only the SRC mission, but also its current challenges, future goals and the critical importance of its work on behalf of PWD.

**Customer Satisfaction Survey/Comprehensive Needs Assessment**

Maine DVR conducts a triennial customer satisfaction survey as part of its Comprehensive Needs Assessment. During 2014, Maine DVR will be contracting with a vendor to complete a survey of recent DVR clients. Using a battery of standard questions, DVR will be able to compare results of this year’s survey to previous administrations allowing for analysis of changes and trends over time.

**Adult Career Exploration Workshop (CEW)**

The CEW is a five-day class where individuals explore areas of interest while uncovering skills and talents leading to a specific job goal. When individuals participate in a CEW, they go through the VR program more quickly, resulting in less overall spending on their programs. The CEW is in use statewide. Each office maintains its own schedule for the workshops. At an approximate cost of $250 per participant, the CEW has been a cost efficient way to reduce costs per employment closure and improve time to closure.

**Transition Career Exploration Workshop (TCEW)**

The Transition CEW features many interactive activities and games designed to engage students in learning more about their strengths and interests as they think ahead to possible employment goals. Designed in 45 minute modules, the Transition CEW is a flexible curriculum that can be delivered in collaboration with schools or other youth serving organizations. The TCEW was included as a strategy to improve transition planning in the Maine Department of Education’s State Personnel Development Grant. DVR and MDOE have delivered training on the model to special educators and others during the past fiscal year to increase use of the TCEW statewide.

**“Bridges – Pathway to Employment” Career Exploration Workshop**

The curriculum, developed from the Adult CEW and the TCEW, is designed for individuals with intellectual disabilities to help them learn more about their vocational interests and abilities, as well as the world of work in preparation for successful employment. BRS developed the curriculum in collaboration with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), DOE, self-advocates and CRPs. Now, in partnership with DHHS, DVR is currently rolling it out as a tool across the state to particularly assist in meeting the needs of those who need long-term supports for employment success, but are waiting for funding through DHHS.

**Deaf-Blind and Dual Sensory Communication**

DVR’s Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened has work closely with the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired as it continued with its efforts to address a critical need for highly qualified interpreters and other well-trained staff with skills to work with our consumers of the VR program who are deaf-blind or have the dual sensory impairment of vision and hearing. Due to the limited access in Maine to anyone with this specialty training, both from within DBVI and elsewhere, the Division continued its work with a group of collaborative partners (University of Southern Maine, Helen Keller National Center, Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Division of the Deaf, Late Deafened and Hard of Hearing, and the Iris Network) in 2001 to provide specialized training to a number of individuals who will serve as professional Deaf-Blind Interpreters, as well as volunteers within the Support Service Provider (SSP) program. The program was designed to connect these professional Deaf-Blind Interpreters and volunteer SSP’s with adults with dual sensory impairments who are in need of these types of communication access services.

Since 2011, approximately 25 individuals have been trained and are available to provide these volunteer SSP services, while approximately 20 professional ASL interpreters have been trained as interpreters for people who are deaf-blind. In addition, a process for matching consumers to the needed service providers was developed and implemented, and avenues for additional training were identified.

**Employment Specialist for Executive Loan**

The Coming together with Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) Project Workgroup on Business Relations has proposed the identification and development of Employment Specialists for Executive Loan (ESEL) as a key component to the Business Relations model. The Business Relations model targets large businesses (those with 100 or more employees) as the primary customer. The ESEL is “loaned” to a business for a defined time period to coordinate the start-up or expansion of the business’s strategies to integrate people with disabilities in their workforce. The ESEL observes operations and consults with the business to understand their culture, core values, workforce needs and hiring practices in order to connect the business with both qualified job applicants with disabilities and resources to maximize successful employment outcomes. This ESEL model was successfully piloted at P&G/Tambrands, a company in Maine that manufactures and distributes feminine hygiene products. DVR contracted with a Community Rehabilitation Provider to engage the time of an Employment Specialist who had a strong background in the private business sector. This experience helped to further develop the ESEL concept. This model resulted in significantly reduced cost of services to support VR clients; and a good return on investment for the company (P&G reported an 11% recidivism rate for the employees with disabilities, as compared to 22% for those who do not have a known disability). Currently, a training program is being developed for interested Employment Specialists that will prepare them to be more effective in their role of supporting the business customer. Business partners have helped to develop competencies and a job description for the ESEL. They are also helping develop the training curriculum and will host portions of the training at their respective business sites. The goal is to have trained Employment Specialists available throughout the state that can provide this service and be reimbursed through the Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.

**2*. Identify all supported employment program goals consistent with the goals described in Attachment 4.11(c)(4), including an evaluation of the extent to which the supported employment program goals were achieved.***

* ***Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.***
* ***Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.***

***3. Provide an Assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY 2012.***

**Provide an Assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY 2012.**

Maine DVR again met five of the performance indicators in Standard 1. Rehabilitation Rate 1.2 was the unmet standard still below Federal minimum but improved from the previous year. Standard 1.1 and 1.2 are monitored monthly; all standards are monitored quarterly.

***4. Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in FY 2012.***

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

* **Describe quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities**
* **Describe the timing of the transition to extended services**

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

**• Describe quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities**

**• Describe the timing of the transition to extended services**

The Division continues to take steps to ensure the quality of Supported Employment. Our management information system reports provide information on weekly wages, hours worked, and public assistance at the time of application and closure. The reports also provide information on the type of disabilities being served, the cost per case, and the average cost by counselor, region, and state.

Planning discussions continue with both Developmental Services and Mental Health Services to work with DVR in tracking employment outcomes. We are able to document individuals who are eligible for VR, but who lack long-term support preventing plan development.

Maine strives to improve the quality of supported employment services through the provision of various training opportunities. The Division continues to work with the Maine DHHS to oversee the implementation of a comprehensive workforce development system for Employment Specialists and case managers. The inclusion of cases managers in these events is to educate about the importance of work in our consumers’ lives, the sharing staff training is supported by the MOUs between BRS and DHHS.

In 2011 classes were held for case managers on employment tools and resources at four different CareerCenters throughout the state. The Division regularly shares relative training and webinar announcements with the Provider community and provides ongoing staff development.

We have identified minimum training requirements for the new CRPs to become approved providers. CRPs must provide evidence that all Employment Specialists and Job Coaches have completed one of the BRS approved training curricula. The Division and DHHS have agreed that any curriculum must be ACRE certified in order to be added to the list of approved Employment Specialist or Job Coach Certification training programs. DVRs expectation is that this training requirement and a comprehensive workforce development system, along with other established standards for service provided through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) and our in-state accreditation process will continue to improve services to all DVR consumers.

The CARF and In-State approval process for CRPs consists of a number of facets such as reviewing policies and procedures that reflect knowledge and application of quality supported employment services in adherence to APSE standards for Supported Employment.

Areas evaluated are:

• mission statement,

• admission criteria,

• policy and practice on Assessments,

• case coordination, client input,

• health and safety issues,

• human resource issues such as staff qualifications and background checks,

• client rights and

• appeal procedures.

Other parts of the approval process include interviews with key stakeholders such as clients, employers, funding agents, etc.

**1. Scope of Supported Employment**

The primary services provided to clients in supported employment continue to be

• Assessment,

• Job Skills Coaching, and

• Job Placement.

These direct services are provided by an Employment Specialist or a Job Coach, who supports the client through activities such as: intervention with supervisors and peers, and aids integration into the company’s social environment.

Other allowable services that are provided when a need is identified include supplemental assessments, social skills training, observation or supervision of the individual, transportation, and facilitation of natural supports.

The Division provides whatever is required to achieve and maintain integrated competitive employment. Based on ongoing commitments from the DHHS Office Adult Mental Health Services to provide extended support to all individuals using the supported employment model when they have stabilized and are ready for extended support, the DVR continues to expand the percentage of individuals with long-term mental illness who require ongoing supports to sustain employment.

Changes through the DHHS approved June 1, 2006 increased resources available for the extended support funds for individuals with developmental disabilities. This results in up to 600 hours of Supported Employment services available per year expanding opportunity for extended job supports for an estimated 1400 individuals.

We anticipate that 300 to 400 hundred of these individuals will be applying for VR during the next year. In this past year extended support services have been more limited for individual with developmental disabilities.

Developmental Services did implement a new Medicaid waiver program shifting resources from day habilitation services to community supports which includes employment. This has resulted in additional individuals with developmental disabilities being eligible for supported employment with Developmental Services providing extended supports. We developed an agreement which coordinates the delivery of supported employment services including extended supports.

Unfortunately, due to funding cuts the new waiver is not open to new applicants at this time. DVR and Developmental Services are committed to working with those individuals already on the waiver.

The Division continues to receive funds from the state to provide extended support to individuals with traumatic brain injuries. We estimated in 2012 that between 25 to 30 individuals with traumatic brain injury will be able to participate in supported employment using state funded extended support. DVR ended 2012 having served 46.

Another state funded program providing long term supports is the Basic Extended Support Program that purchases extended support for all disability groups. The annual services CAP for individuals receiving long term supports from this fund is $3000. This funding supported 144 individuals during 2012. Presently, the disability groups this program funds includes any individuals who have been closed successfully in the DVR or DBVI program, who require no more than $3000 a year in long term support (for job coaching).

Transitional employment is also available to individuals with chronic mental illness. Transitional employment recognizes that persons with mental illness, in some cases, can learn a skill at a community based training site and transfer those skills to an actual work site. It also recognizes that the primary need is not always job skills training but emotional support, reinforcement, and evaluation of the client’s mental health.

**2. Extent of Supported Employment Services**

We anticipate three to four hundred of these individuals will be applying for VR during the next year. In this past year extended support services have been more limited for individual with developmental disabilities. Developmental Services did implement a new Medicaid waiver program shifting resources from day habilitation services to employment. The new waiver program has resulted in additional individuals with developmental disabilities being eligible for supported employment with Developmental Services providing extended supports.

DVR developed an agreement which coordinates the delivery of supported employment services including extended supports. Unfortunately, due to funding cuts the new waiver is not open to new applicants at this time.

DVR and Developmental Services are committed to working with those individuals already on the waiver. DVR continues to look closely at the true need for ongoing supports and reserving this model for those with the most severe disability. There were a number of individuals that benefited from the "place" and "train" model without necessarily needing the extended support. There is also greater emphasis on natural supports.

**3. Timing of Transition to Extended Services**

The Division’s rules state the maximum time period for DVR time-limited services is eighteen (18) months, unless the IPE indicates that more than eighteen (18) months of services are necessary in order for the individual to achieve job stability prior to transition to extended services. In day-to-day practice, a team approach is used to determine when an individual is ready to transition to extended support.