

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

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4.2(c) Input of State Rehabilitation Council

The State Rehabilitation Council members conducted two focus groups in Hickory, NC and in Wilmington, NC. The Council held two public hearings in Wilson, NC and in Raleigh, NC during FFY2012 for the collection of information to be used in the development of the FFY2013 State Plan. The Council's Committee on the State Plan met with Division staff members to work on the development of the State Plan. The State Rehabilitation Council met on Thursday, June 14, 2012, reviewed and approved the State Plan for FFY2013. The Council recommendations and the Division's response were:

- The Council's chairperson, Beth Butler, stressed the importance of the State Plan in working with individuals served by the Division in reaching their goal of employment. She also indicated that one of the roles of the Council is work with the Division insuring the State Plan is implemented and followed.

Division's response: The Division welcomes involvement and encourages close cooperation between the Division's staff and the State Rehabilitation Council.

- The Council's chairperson discussed her participation in a recent Business Expo with the Charlotte/Mecklenburg County Schools to introduce different careers that could be available to Transition age students with disabilities. She expressed the importance of providing the transitions services to students who are blind or visually impaired from the Division. Several members of the Council agreed that continued support of the transition program is needed to provide students with opportunities to explore careers and make a successful transition to post-secondary training or employment. The Council is very concerned that the Transition Program will be able to maintain its current programs through a very difficult economic period in North Carolina.

Division's response: The Division appreciated the Council's concern on maintaining programs and their recognition of the importance the transition program.

- The Council approved the Division's Priorities and Goals for FFY 2013 without modifications. There was a question about the possibility

Division's response: The Division will finish the State Plan and submit to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human services for approval and then to the Rehabilitation Services Administration for approval.

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

The Division has cooperative agreements with several entities that are not part of the Statewide Workforce Investment System. They are the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges, North Carolina Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, the University of North Carolina System, and State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee.

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The North Carolina Community College System is comprised of 59 institutions located in communities both large and small around the state. The system's mission is to provide opportunities for the citizens of North Carolina to further their education and to obtain training in order to successfully compete in an expanding job market. Many of the consumers served by the agency attend these community colleges to obtain an Associate's Degree, to take initial courses toward a four year degree, or to obtain job training in a particular field. Our agreement with the community college system allows us to share information about students such as grades and/or financial information and to establish a working relationship with the Disabled Student Services Office (DSSO) at each campus. The DSSO provides students with the accommodations they require to complete their studies and to advocate for them with classroom instructors and college administration. We have excellent working relationships with the colleges where our consumers are located.

Another resource the Division utilizes through the Community College System is their small business training centers. Consumers who are interested in starting up a business of their own are typically referred to their local community college small business center for training and assistance with developing a business plan. These centers provide on-going support after the individual has obtained approval and is ready to establish their business. This support includes such things as office space, copying services, professional and legal advice, and assistance with marketing.

The North Carolina Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NCASFA) is a professional organization that promotes a high level of competency for administrators of post-secondary educational institutions and other members who work in fields related to student financial assistance. This organization also promotes community relationships through communication with local agencies and organizations. In the past DSB had a formal agreement with NCASFA for the purpose of sharing information regarding financial assistance for consumers attending post-secondary education institutions in North Carolina but as of two years ago, it was felt this formal agreement was no longer necessary and was not renewed. At present, the Division has an informal agreement with the association and more of a working relationship with the Financial Aid Administrators at each institution that consumers are attending.

The University of North Carolina System is a multi-campus university composed of all 16 of North Carolina's public institutions that grant baccalaureate degrees, as well as the NC School of Science and Mathematics, the nation's first public residential high school for gifted students. The agreement the Division has with UNC is similar to that with the NC Community College System. It is to promote the sharing of information about consumers attending the various institutions and to establish a working relationship with the Disabled Students Services Office on each campus.

The Division has not been directly involved with any of the programs or business opportunities

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through the FDA Rural Development but is interested in becoming more familiar with them and determining if they would be of assistance to the consumers we serve.

The Division purchases supported employment services from Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) for individuals who will require the assistance of a job coach to find a job, then learn the duties of the job and finally, long term support to insure the individual is able to retain the job. The CRP must meet certain requirements before services are purchased, such as the Contractor will maintain accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), Council on Accreditation (COA), or other Division approved national accrediting authorities, be a vendor with the state of North Carolina and accept payments for services provided through an outcome based program.

The Division has cooperative agreements with eight CRPs for the provision of long term follow up support services (extended services) to individuals who achieved their goal of employment assistance from the supported employment program. The CRP meets with the individual, based on the Division's phase system for long term follow up. The CRP receives payment for each of hour of contact with the individual at their jobsite to intervene when needed to assist the individual if there are problems on the jobsite.

This past year, the Division established Memorandums of Agreement with both the Lumbee Tribe and Eastern Cherokee Tribe Vocational Rehabilitation Services Programs. The DSB Assistant Director and Staff Development Specialist met with the Directors of both Vocational Rehabilitation Services Programs and their staff at their respective tribal headquarters. We discussed ways in which we could collaborate in serving individuals of each Native American Tribe, as well as ways we could provide training on the Lumbee and Cherokee Tribal culture and customs to DSB employees. We also discussed ways the DSB Nursing Eye Care Consultant could collaborate with staff at the Cherokee Tribe's Diabetic Clinic for the purpose of identifying individuals for referral to the DSB Independent Living and Vocational Rehabilitation Programs. We are working closely with staff in both of these programs and have been serving any eligible referrals that are made to our Fayetteville or Asheville District Offices. The Director of the Lumbee Tribe Vocational Services Program is presently serving on our State Rehabilitation Council.

4.8(b)(2) Coordination with Education Officials

The Division's intent is to provide transition services to all eligible visually impaired students in North Carolina. To achieve this goal, the Division has agreements with NC Department of Public Instruction, and with a number of county school districts.

The Division has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Public Instruction which focuses on students with visual impairments being served by local education agencies

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(LEAs) who are of transition age (14 to 21) and who need vocational rehabilitation services. This agreement acknowledges the role of the Division in providing these services and encourages local LEA's to develop a working relationship with the Division and the staff who cover their county for the purpose of referring students to be served by the Division. There is no cost sharing with this agreement. The Division has a Memorandum of Agreements to provide Transition Services to the Eastern NC School for the Deaf and the NC School for the Deaf in the western part of the state, and for the Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh. Although these agreements are for the purpose of providing transition services, there are differences in cost sharing and in the structure of how the services are provided.

The agreement with the schools for the deaf outlines the role of DSB in serving students who are deaf/blind. It designates a DSB Rehabilitation Counselor in each part of the state to be the liaison with the school and the one to accept referrals. It also further defines the services we can provide and that our Deaf/Blind Specialists will also work with any student who has been found eligible for services. There is no cost sharing with this agreement.

Our agreement with the Governor Morehead School for the Blind does not involve cost sharing. A Rehabilitation (Transition) Counselor and Community Employment Specialist are the two positions for which the salaries are utilized. The Transition Counselor and Community Employment Specialist are responsible for providing transition services for the students at the school who are determined eligible.

The Division has renewed agreements with fourteen (14) other public school systems, across the state. These agreements contain components for cost sharing of staff transition positions, for the duties of these positions, and for the services to be provided by both parties in meeting the needs of transition age students. In all but one of these agreements a Transition Counselor and Community Employment Specialist is assigned to work with the students. There is a single agreement that provides a Transition Counselor alone to work with that particular school district. All services that are typically available to adult consumers are made available to students through these programs. All cost for services for which a student is found eligible is paid for by the agency out of case service funds.

The school systems the Division continues to have agreements with, Brunswick County, Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, Cumberland County, Durham Public Schools, Edgecombe County, Guilford County, Nash-Rocky Mount, New Hanover County, Onslow County, Pender County, Pitt County, Wake County Schools, Wilson County, and Winston-Salem-Forsyth County Schools.

In situations where no agreement exists, students are served by the counselor with an adult caseload who covers the county where the student lives. The Division's goal is to have the majority of eligible students served by a Transition Counselor through a cooperative agreement.

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Reviews have found that visually impaired students in areas served by one of these agreements are identified earlier, typically by age fourteen (14), and referred to the Transition Counselor. The counselor has a better working relationship with the school staff because they are housed in one of the school district's facilities and participate in the schools' services and activities for students with visual impairments. The counselor is more knowledgeable of the resources within the district and can participate more fully in the student's Individualized Education Planning process. Therefore, the agency plans to continue to implement programs in other locations around the state.

Regardless of whether eligible students are served through a cooperative agreement or not, the Division's policy requires that an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) be developed for all students prior to high school graduation and services be provided according to the plan.

The Division is developing working relationship with the Department of Public Instruction, new outreach program designed to provide consulting services for blind and visually impaired students in the public schools. The DPI Outreach Program and staff in the District Offices have been meeting to coordinate outreach services to students attending all schools (public, private and home schooled in North Carolina. The relationship between programs is to identify students who may eligible to receive services from the Division.

The Division developed a Transition Certificate Program with Winston-Salem State University for Division staff working in the Transition program to increase their knowledge of working the student and their families to make the move from high school into post secondary training or work. The program will consist of the following curriculum, Transition from School to Work, Job Placement in Transition, Vocational Evaluation/Transition, and Family Collaboration/Intervention. Enrolled staff will complete the program in December 2012.

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.

The Division purchases supported employment services from Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) for individuals who will require the assistance of a job coach to find a job, then learn the duties of the job and finally, long term support to insure the individual is able to retain the job. The CRP must meet certain requirements before services are purchased, such as the Contractor will maintain accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), Council on Accreditation (COA), or other Division approved national accrediting authorities, be a vendor with the state of North Carolina and accept payments for services provided through an outcome based program.

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The Division has cooperative agreements with eight CRPs for the provision of long term follow up support services (extended services) to individuals who achieved their goal of employment assistance from the supported employment program. The CRP meets with the individual based on DSB phase system for long term follow up. The Contractor will provide for extended services and ongoing support services through individual contacts on the schedule as listed below. The contractor will bill the Division these contacts and shall follow the phases of the

Division's extended services plan as follows:

Phase 1: Twice monthly contacts with the individual and employer for the first 6 months of extended services, unless there is a provision in the IPE for off-site monitoring.

Phase 2: At the end of 6 months, the contractor, individual and employer should make determination as to the individual's stabilization on the job. If the individuals well stabilized, an offer should be made to the individual and employer that continued monitoring could be made once every six months. If this choice is chosen by the individual and employer, the contractor must continue to monitor in the phase no less than 24 months. The individual and employer need to sign a waiver acknowledging that they are in agreement to entering into this phase.

Phase 3: Once the individual has successfully completed phase 2, the contractor may offer the individual and employer an opportunity to cease regular monitoring. If they chose to enter into phase 3, the individual is placed on an inactive list and monitoring would only be at the individual or employer's request. To enter into this phase, the individual and employer must sign a waiver agreeing to the conditions of phase 3. If the contractor is contacted by either the individual or employer, the contractor will make an on-site visit to determine what services are needed to re-stabilize the individual's job. If the contractor determines that more than minimal services are needed, then the contractor should refer the individual back to the Division's Vocational Rehabilitation Program for possible case activation. However, if the contractor determines that the issues can be resolved with for example, short term training or educating of staff, this service should be provided to the individual and/or employer.

The Division provides the Contractor with staff training, consultation and technical assistance, as appropriate. The Division's VR Counselor coordinates with the Contractor individual admissions and subsequent services. Consistent with Division policy, the referring VR Counselor provides the Contractor with the necessary documents. The Division participates in admissions, attends subsequent staffing, and provides individual rehabilitation counseling and other rehabilitation

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services to promote the individual's progress while enrolled with the Contractor. Individual records will reflect evidence of mutual effort and each party will keep the other informed regarding placement and follow-up activities.

The Division Rehabilitation Program Specialist meets periodically with the CRPs personnel to provide assistance relative to standards compliance, fiscal accountability, quality of service, individual referrals, and the planning of program services for Division individuals as identified in this contract.

The Division developed a community-based work adjustment services program with assistance from several community rehabilitation programs (CRP) for eligible individuals who require initial intervention to improve and increase productivity, attendance, punctuality, ability to interact appropriately with coworkers and supervisors, and work tolerance, yet do not require long-term support. CRP's across the state have developed specialized programs for these services that include situational assessments, job placement and job coaching services. Payments are made to the CRP's using an outcome based format, with increment payments made based on milestone basis.

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

The Division has contacted both NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and NC Division of Deaf and Hard of Hearing to inquire if these programs directly provide supported employment services and/or extended services. The response is that neither program provided these services. The Division also contacted NC Division of Mental Health if it provided supported employment services and/or extended services. Mental Health does not provide direct supported employment services but through the CAP fund does pay for limited extended services to individuals who meet the eligibility guidelines for the program. However, a waiting list is developed for each local management agency in the system and funds are very limited.

The Division employs an outcome based method of purchasing supported employment services from Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) for eligible individuals who are determined to be most significantly disabled and are in need of supported employment. The CRP must meet three requirements; (1) the CRP must be certified by a nationally recognized certification program such as Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), Council on Accreditation (COA), or Council on Quality Leadership (CQL), (2) the CRP must be a vendor of the state, and (3) the CRP is willing to accept the Division's milestone payment system. The Division continues to contract for extended services and currently has agreements with CRPs to provide this important service.

There are five milestones and two incentives throughout the entire supported employment process. The milestones are:

Milestone 1: Assessment and Employment Plan

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Completion: The eligible individual has completed a situation assessment, and an Employment Plan has been developed to identify the strategies to be used to assist the individual in reaching their goal of employment.

Payment rate of \$500.00

Milestone 2: Job Development Services

Completion: The individual has completed applications with 10 different employers and three interviews with confirming documentation to referring VR counselor. If the individual is placed on a job prior to completing 10 applications and three interviews, the milestone is considered to be completed and payment can be made.

Payment rate of \$500

Milestone 3: Job Placement Services

Completion: The eligible individual is placed on a job and has worked for 14 business days with confirming documentation to the VR counselor of placement and progress.

(Business day is a day in which the individual has actually worked on the job.) Payment rate is \$3,800

Incentive 1:

The individual is placed on a job by the CRP staff in 90 days or less from the date the individual begins the situational assessment.

The incentive payment rate is \$200. This can only be paid once per case.

Milestone 4: Stabilization

Completion: The individual has learned the tasks of the job and has become comfortable with the work environment and coworkers. The job coach is spending no more than a weekly visit to the job site. The individual, VR Counselor, and Job Coach including feedback from the employer, all agree the individual has stabilized in the job.

Payment rate is \$3,800

Milestone 5: Successful Employment Outcome (Status 26 Closure)

Completion: The eligible individual is considered successfully working without provision of substantial services for at least 90 days from the date of stabilization.

Payment rate is \$1,200

Incentive 2:

The employer provides health insurance coverage at little or no cost to the individual, and the individual is eligible to be covered at the time of case closure.

The incentive payment rate is \$200.

Total payment for each successfully completed placement will be \$10,200.

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The Community Rehabilitation Program provides documentation in the form of a copy of the Job Coaches case notes to the DSB VR Counselor with each invoice for payment of the milestones. The DSB VR counselor and individual must agree the milestone was met before payment is made.

4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

The Division's vocational rehabilitation (VR) program served 3,877 individuals over the past year, and the number served is projected to change in the upcoming years with continued outreach efforts being made with the Spanish and Latino populations. The Division has developed training for all VR staff with Cherokee and Lumbee representatives. This training will give staff an understanding of and how The Division can best serve those in these populations to be successful independently and in employment. The Division hopes to continue partnering with Cherokee and Lumbee Vocational Rehabilitation agencies in the future.

The independent living rehabilitation (ILR) program served 1,486 individuals during the past year. It is determined that, based on these current numbers of individuals served, the division has adequate qualified rehabilitation staff positions.

Positions within the Division that fall under CSPD requirements are 32 VR counselors, 15 ILR counselors, 1 vocational evaluator, 3 VR district supervisors, 3 VR district supervisors for a total of 54 personnel required to serve these numbers of individuals.

If vacancies occur in these positions, applicants are recruited that will meet the agency's definition of "qualified rehabilitation counselor". Turnover rate for VR counselor I positions has averaged about 26.087% while the turnover rate for VR counselor II positions has averaged about 6.667%. Based on the turnover rate and current positions, including the number of individuals who are approaching retirement age, it is anticipated that a total of 15 new VR and ILR counselors will be needed during the next year. This will result in the potential for recruitment of 45 new individuals over a 3 year period. It must be recognized that some of these vacancies are created by promotion into administrative roles in the agency that are not counted in the 54 counselor positions. Other administrative positions are anticipated to become open due to retirements over the next 5 years, creating openings for advancement of identified positions.

The Division has developed a system to analyze and record the educational background of rehabilitation counselors as they are hired. This system also tracks the progress of current rehabilitation counselors who are working towards compliance with CSPD requirements such as those hired with related degrees that only need 1 or 2 courses.

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The breakdown of education levels for the 54 positions subject to CSPD requirements is:

31 with Master Degrees in Rehabilitation or Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC)

11 with Master Degrees in closely related fields that is considered a “qualified rehabilitation counselor” by CSPD standards

3 with Master Degrees in closely related fields that is currently taking classes to become a “qualified rehabilitation counselor” by CSPD standards

9 vacancies

Therefore, 42 of the 45 individuals currently employed VR Staff meet the education standards for qualified rehabilitation counselor, which is 93%. Three individuals are currently enrolled in a VR master degree programs to take 1 to 2 courses to become qualified. Individuals who will meet the definition of “qualified rehabilitation counselor” are being recruited for all vacancies that occurred over the past year and are hired whenever possible.

The Division utilizes 18 paraprofessionals in the VR program. The breakdown is as follows: 2 rehabilitation casework assistants, 1 rehabilitation casework technician, 1 casework technician, 1 business services representatives, 6 human services placement specialist, and 7 community employee specialists. At present we have enough paraprofessionals to meet the number of eligible individuals being served. It is anticipated the division will need 10 additional paraprofessionals in the next 5 years as numbers served increase and due to turnover.

The agency currently has 28 staff with 30 years or more and 19 staff with 25 years to 30 years for a total of 47 staff that could retire in the next 5 years. The Division has developed a relationship with four North Carolina universities who currently offer graduate degrees in master of rehabilitation counseling studies. These include East Carolina University (ECU), A&T State University, Winston-Salem State University (WSSU), and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH).

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors	32	6	35
2	Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors	15	1	11

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3	Vocational Evaluator	1	0	0
4	District Supervisors	3	1	0
5	Counselor-In-Charge	3	1	0

The Division has developed a relationship with four North Carolina universities who currently offer graduate degrees in rehabilitation counseling studies. These include East Carolina University (ECU), A&T State University, Winston-Salem State University (WSSU), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH). AT&T State and the WSSU programs are historically black universities and were established with the assistance of Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) grant and school funding. Stipends and financial aid assistance are offered to candidates in these programs. Classes began in fall, 2003 and continue to this date. Division representatives serve on the steering committee at each university. The universities and the division plan to continue partnering to provide internships for students as needed. Winston-Salem State University received funding in 2002 to offer a bachelor degree in rehabilitation studies, and coursework continues. The master degree program in rehabilitation studies is designed in coordination with the undergraduate program to encourage these graduates to pursue a master degree. North Carolina A&T State University has used the structure in existing master degree programs in guidance and counseling to build the rehabilitation counseling master degree program. UNC has received an RSA grant to provide a master's degree in psychiatric disabilities and is currently offering four courses as part of their master's program.

Over the past year, 56 individuals have graduated from master degree programs in North Carolina universities with a master's degree in rehabilitation studies. The Division has actively recruited from all the Universities for these graduates. It is anticipated that graduates from these programs will greatly enhance recruitment for vacant positions in the future.

The Division currently has 3 staff hired with related degrees attending San Diego State University taking theories and techniques of counseling and medical/psychosocial aspects of a disability through distance education.

Row	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
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1	San Diego State University	3	3	3	0
2	Virginia Commonwealth (VCU)	1	1	0	1

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

This past fall, the Division offered paid internship position for students in their last semester of a master level degree program in rehabilitation counseling. Establishment of these positions was done with the goal of increasing qualified applicants for positions. The Division would like to continue the internship program in an effort to strengthen the pool of candidates for possible employment with DSB but due to the present economic situation, the division has suspended paid internships.

Nationwide recruitment is done by posting positions on the Internet and on federal job banks. The Division’s personnel office continues to list vacancies with a job bank for rehabilitation professionals through all universities receiving RSA funding. All openings are included in email messages to all ECU students and recent graduates in the master degree program. A section has been added to the agency’s website labeled “Career Opportunities”. It leads the viewer to a list of jobs available with the agency. Each job includes a brief description of the occupation. A link will then take the viewer to the NC Department of Health and Human Services job vacancy page. A toll-free number is available on the website should the viewer wish to call about occupations within the division.

The Division currently has 4 state office level management and area supervisors who have more than 25 years of service. The need for succession planning was identified and steps have been taken. The Division utilizes the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services leadership training as a point of entrance for pre-supervisory training. The Division conducts leadership/pre-supervisory training in an effort to begin to identify staff interested in management opportunities.

The Division uses affirmative action to insure the employment and advancement in employment of qualified individuals with disabilities. On an annual basis, the Division conducts a workforce analysis of its representation of persons with disabilities, of persons of different ethnic groups and of males and females in different personnel classifications and occupational categories. Those classifications and occupational categories in which persons with disabilities and minority groups are under-represented are identified, and goals are established to increase representation in the division’s workforce.

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During their first year of employment, all rehabilitation counselors are required to complete developmental training in casework requirements and documentation. The chiefs of rehabilitation and the area and district rehabilitation supervisors provide this training in small groups to directly address agency policies and procedures for professional casework practices. After 1 year of employment, rehabilitation counselors who meet the standard for qualified rehabilitation counselor may request promotion to rehabilitation counselor II. Evaluation procedures for this promotion consist of a written and oral examination of casework policies and procedures, caseload review and audit, and review of contact with caseload eligible individuals to assess quality and satisfaction of services. The chief of rehabilitation field services administers and reviews all aspects of the examination process. Counselors are also required to participate in a week-long adjustment to blindness training which is organized by the rehabilitation center teacher staff and management.

Personnel Standards

The Division's policies and procedures provides 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.

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)

The Division implemented a comprehensive system of personnel development (CSPD) as established in the 1998 state plan and as amended in January 1, 1999. This system is based on the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, its regulations, and technical assistance and guidance from Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Changes implemented over past years have resulted in growth of the number of the agency's rehabilitation counselors who meet CSPD education requirements. Currently, 93% of The Division's rehabilitation counselors meet

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CSPD requirements. The Division projects to have resulted in 100% of rehabilitation counselors meeting CSPD requirements by the end of 2015.

The requirements of education and experience for rehabilitation counselor I positions were developed by the Division in conjunction with the Office of State Personnel (OSP), the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and RSA. The standard for vocational rehabilitation counselors at the Division is consistent with the national standard as there is no standard in North Carolina for vocational rehabilitation professionals. On October 1, 2008, the Division initiated a more comprehensive standard. For a rehabilitation counselor I, this standard will include a master degree in rehabilitation counseling; a master degree in a closely related field such as counseling, social work, psychology, and special education; current Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certification; or current enrollment in a qualifying master degree program AND graduation prior to the date of hire. For an independent living rehabilitation counselor, the standard will include the same requirements as for a rehabilitation counselor I or a rehabilitation teacher degree from an accredited institution of higher learning. The Division believes that this more comprehensive standard will assist in recruiting for more difficult-to-fill counselor positions, particularly those positions based in rural areas and those covering several counties which require extensive travel.

The agency will, to the maximum extent possible, hire only those applicants who possess master degrees in rehabilitation counseling or a master degree in a closely related field. Reviews of all transcripts will be conducted by the agency's personnel department and the rehabilitation program specialist for CSPD. If it is determined that an applicant has a master degree in rehabilitation counseling or a closely related field but is in need of specific coursework e.g. Counseling Theories and Techniques and (1 of the following) Medical Aspects of Disability or Psychosocial/Cultural Aspects of Disability, the division will assist the applicant in obtaining that coursework in a manner and time frame agreed upon between the agency and employee. The newly hired counselor will be required to be registered for the first class within 6 months of their hire date. Completion of any needed coursework must be accomplished within 2 years from their hire date but prior to moving to independent counselor status.

If qualified applicants cannot be found after extensive recruitment, the Division will consider applicants who are currently enrolled in an accredited rehabilitation counseling master's degree programs, closely related master's of counseling degree programs, or an accredited rehabilitation teacher degree program if applying for an ILR position and who will be able to obtain their degree within 1 year of hire date.

Staff Development

The Division has an ongoing comprehensive system for personnel development that provides all staff classifications with appropriate job-related training. Staff members complete learning

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requests yearly to identify specific training needs. The program specialist for training analyzes the learning requests, and then plans specific training activities to meet the identified needs. As a result of these requests, training has been provided in an array of training events with relevant curriculum and skills acquisition experiences. The Division has developed and presented intensive training sessions this year.

These included:

- Adjustment to Blindness
- AER-NCDSB, NC Association of Rehabilitation and Education (AER), Governor Morehead School for the Blind, and the NC Department of Public Instruction
- Assistive Technology
- Best Practices for the Division's New Rehabilitation Counselors
- Building Trust Relationships/Job Development and Job Placement
- Medical Update
- Office Assistant
- Orientation & Mobility
- Pre Supervisory
- Professional and Personal Development
- Rehabilitation Center and Evaluation Unit specific topics

A library of rehabilitation resources is maintained in the state office. The program specialist continually reviews available materials for the library, identifies and purchases current information relevant to vocational rehabilitation and to vision-related topics. Areas specifically addressed in the learning requests are targeted in this search of materials. These books and materials are available in regular and adapted format, and can be checked out from the library by any staff member across the state. Equipment is purchased and maintained to enhance training programs, presentations, and small group work.

The Division continues to require professional skills in marketing and in job placement to enhance employment opportunities. Steps have been taken to insure the continuity of these practices with new staff. All new rehabilitation counselors and business representatives receive a brief one-on-one introduction to the job development/placement model by the program specialist for employment during their first month of employment. The Division then sponsors 1 week training, "Building Trust Relationships", an intensive workshop for development of the innovative marketing skills. The program specialist provides follow-up to this training by meeting with the staff for one-on-one training experiences, an on-site interview with an employer

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in his or her area, and other training modalities according to the need. Statistical data gathered since this training occurred indicates that agency staff has increased employer contacts, resulting in more direct placements especially with individuals with significant disabilities.

The Division has maintained the authority granted by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification to provide Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Credits (CRC) for all certified rehabilitation counselors. The agency also has the authority to grant Continuing Educational Units (CEU) by the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET).

The Division has partnered with Mississippi State University Research and Training Center Vision Specialist Certificate Program to train staff in the very specific area of vision. There are 9 staff who have completed and secured a vision specialist certificate, 1 is currently enrolled in the program and will graduate fall 12. The Division has begun the Transition Certificate program with Winston-Salem State University and 2 staff will finish in fall 2012. The agency will begin VR Psychiatric certificate with UNC Chapel Hill in summer 2012.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

The capability to produce Braille is available in all seven district office locations. Information can also be produced in large print for distribution as needed in the district offices with use of existing computer equipment. Mass production of Braille and large print material is done by the specialized communications unit located at the division's state office to support the division's employees who are blind or visually impaired. Information is put on tape for those who prefer this mode of communication by district office staff. Information is also shared using e-communications (e-mail, disks, etc.), and each office has a computer with speech access for staff who use this mode of communication. The Division has placed the policy and procedures manual on the division's website. The website currently contains information about all of the division's programs, frequently used forms, links to resources, the local office locations, and the staff directory.

The Division has a specialized program for persons who have both vision and hearing loss. The program consists of 5 specialists to serve the district offices and a statewide program coordinator who coordinates the activities of this program. Each member of this program is skilled in use of sign language to enhance communication. The consultants work very closely with rehabilitation counselors on all cases where individuals have any degree of both vision and hearing loss. They provide information regarding specialized needs of these individuals, the availability of resources, and the arrangement of appropriate communication. This collaboration insures the individual has the opportunity for maximum participation in a rehabilitation program of services that will lead to successful employment. The Division maintains a list of approved interpreters

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and dedicated funding for interpreting services through the resources of the Department of Health and Human Services.

North Carolina has a large Hispanic/Latino population, with an increasing number of Spanish-speaking individuals. The Division has worked with other organizations to provide outreach information about available services. The rehabilitation program handbook and the brochure, "Having Trouble with Your Vision", have been printed in Spanish for distribution. Software has been purchased in several offices that will translate appointment letters and individual plans for employment (IPE) into Spanish. A list of qualified interpreters is maintained in each office, and these can be hired as required to enhance communication. When necessary, all offices have access to a state-contracted service for interpreting services available through use of a telephone. When an applicant or eligible individual meets with a staff member, the Telelanguage service is contacted, and they obtain a language specific interpreter by telephone. Through use of a speakerphone, the interpreter translates the conversations into a language that the individual and staff understand. Initial feedback from use of this program is that it is efficient and constructive to effective communication.

Also, the Division has purchased Rosetta Stone-Spanish and made the program available to all staff in the agency. Staff will learn enough everyday language to work with the Latino applicants and eligible individual. The Division currently has 13 staff engaged in the program and it is hoped that the majority of staff will participate over the next year.

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

The Division works with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to insure all students who are blind or visually impaired have access to vocational rehabilitation services while attending public school. The Division has 15 memorandums of agreements with school systems to provide transition programs for their students who are blind or visually impaired. These programs work with students who are blind or visually impaired, the school staff, and the parents or guardians as the student transitions from school to work, and continue working with them until they achieve their employment goals. The specialized programs are located in the following school systems. Cumberland County Schools, Mecklenburg County Schools, Pitt County Schools, Wilson County Schools, Nash/Rocky Mount Schools, Edgecombe County Schools, Durham County Schools, Wake County Schools, Guilford County Schools, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, New Hanover County Schools, Pender County Schools, Onslow County Schools, Brunswick County Schools, and the Governor Morehead School for the Blind. Each program consists of a rehabilitation counselor and a community employment specialist who are trained to work with students during their transition from school to work.

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All rehabilitation counselors have received training on IDEA. Rehabilitation counselors in the district offices develop relationships with school systems and with teachers who serve students with blindness or visual impairments in their coverage area. They participate as member of the school's individualized education program (IEP) team as a provider of transition services for students who are blind or who are visually impaired. Consultation is provided to all rehabilitation counselors who include students on their caseload. The program specialist and the specialized transition counselors are available to advise counselors in areas such as participation on IEP team and location of specialized resources for students as they transition from school to work.

The Division provides additional specialized services for students, such as the summer youth programs at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. One program "SAVVY" (Summer Adjustment to Blindness Vital to Visually Impaired Youth) World Of Work provides career exploration, paid internships with job coaching, interviewing skills and counseling provided by DSB staff. One program "SAVVY" Youth in Transition provides a classroom setting and field trips to develop skills and confidence for greater independence, specific life skills, basic living skills, social development, vocational and study skills and independent living. One program "SAVVY" College Prep provides "college survival skills," such as independent study habits and maximum use of any assistive technology.

In addition, the Division provides 3 "mini centers" throughout the state in coordination with the vocational rehabilitation transition program staff and the independent living staff for those students who cannot attend one of the center programs. DSB also provides 2 recreational/challenge programs to build self-confidence.

A rehabilitation program specialist is assigned to coordinate transition services to insure all students have access to the Division's vocational rehabilitation services while in high school. The school systems with transition programs renew their cooperative agreements for funding and the transition program specialist coordinates the involvement of the local Division staff, the school staff, and the division's financial officers to insure these agreements are complete and accurate.

The Division continues to expand the availability of additional transition programs that can better prepare students in transition from school to work, and develops specialized training in transitions services. The Department of Public Instruction's consultant for vision impairment and the division's specialist for transition services are working together to identify areas to establish new programs and to provide consultation for the school systems in transition program development. The program specialist is responsible for maintaining a good relationship with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to insure continued communication at the state level that will enhance the availability of services to students in their local school systems. DPI's consultant for vision impairment serves on the division's state rehabilitation council.

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4.11(b) Annual Estimates of Individuals to be served and Cost of Services

During Federal Fiscal Year 2011, the Division served, 3,877 individuals with Title I case service funds expenditures of \$4,733,085. During Federal Year 2010, 3,516 individuals received services at a cost of Title I case service funds of \$4,432,166.

During Federal Fiscal Year 2013, the Division estimates that 3,800 individuals will receive vocational rehabilitation services using Title I funds. Projected cost of services is estimated to be \$4,700,000 without implementation of order of selection.

During Federal Fiscal Year 2011, the Division served 75 individuals with the most significant disabilities (MSD) with supported employment services using Title VI, Part B, funds of \$30,230. During Federal Fiscal Year 2010, 71 individuals with the most significant disabilities were served at a cost of \$165,723.

During Federal Fiscal Year 2013, the Division estimates that 85 individuals with the most significant disabilities will be provided supported employment services with Title VI, Part B, funds at a projected cost of \$165,723.

These individuals will also be eligible for use of Title I funds for other services, such as medical, training, guidance and counseling or other required services. Therefore, these individuals to receive supported employment services through Title VI funds are also included in the estimated number of individuals who may receive Title I funds in the table below.

The projected costs represent only the cost of services purchased in the provision of assessment and other services to applicants and eligible individuals. The Division has an Order of Selection Plan for eligibility determination under the Rehabilitation Act. It has not been implemented, as the Division has provided vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible individuals.

Attachment 4.11(c) (1) State Goals and Priorities for FFY 2013

**PRIORITY 1: INCREASE THE AVERAGE WAGES AND BENEFITS OF INDIVIDUALS
CLOSED WITH SUCCESSFUL WAGE-EARNING EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES**

Goal 1: Individuals who are blind or visually impaired in North Carolina will have access to employment opportunities that provide good wages and level of benefits.

Objective (a): The Division's staff will obtain placements for eligible individuals who have recently completed post-secondary training or occupational education through a specialized on-the-job training program called the "Intern Program". The "Intern Program" replaces a similar on-the-job training program funded through ARRA called ARRA On-The-Job Training (ARRA OJT). This training program gives newly trained eligible individuals a competitive edge with the

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number of experienced individuals in the current job market due to company closings and layoffs. DSB reimburses an employer up to 100% of the individual's wages and benefits contribution without requiring a commitment of hiring for a specific period of time agreed upon in a written agreement with the employer and the Division. The economy recovery in North Carolina has been slower than anticipated, especially in the more rural areas of the state. Therefore, this will remain a strategy through September, 2013, with the goal of seven placements that result in five permanent job offers and four successful employment outcomes.

Objective (b): Division staff will have resources of community-based work adjustment services through community rehabilitation programs for eligible individuals who require this service for successful employment. It is a resource for individuals who need short-term job coaching to be successful on the job, but do not require long-term support services afforded by supported employment services. The goal for FFY2013 will be five successful employment closures with use of this program.

Goal 2: Increase staff knowledge about careers and employment opportunities in the State and the requirements of these positions.

Objective (a): Provide ongoing training experiences for all Division VR counselors, business representatives and community employment specialists about career opportunities in North Carolina's changing economy to include a segment on job analysis and use of assistive technology.

Objective (b): Expand the use of the office plan in each seven district offices for contacting businesses in the locations that targets employers offering higher wages and career advancement.

Objective (c): Provide targeted one-on-one training by the Program Specialist for Job Development and Placement to each rehabilitation counselor and business representative that will consist of job coaching through an employer interview. In those areas and for those staff with lower numbers of business contacts and successful placements, a follow-up session will be held.

Goal 3: Increase community Rehabilitation Counselor awareness of opportunities for internships and other work experiences for transition age students, especially in areas where specialized transition programs are not available.

Objective (a): Maintain a section on the agency's web page that will include information about opportunities for transition-age and college age students for job internship opportunities, work experiences, conferences and ideas, to be maintained by the Program Specialist for Transition with contributions made by the specialized transition programs staff.

Objective (b): Provide training workshops for community new Rehabilitation Counselors on Transition services that needs to be provided to students attending schools where the Division does not have a formal Transition Program.

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PRIORITY 2: ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT) REQUIRED FOR EMPLOYMENT

Goal 1: Provide access technology for all eligible individuals who require specific equipment and software in order to obtain maintain and regain employment.

Objective: Purchase of technology for eligible individuals without regard to financial eligibility when required for success in reaching their vocational goal. The Division changed the procedure for purchasing required AT from a service provided only to those who meet financial need criteria, to a service provided to eligible individuals without regard to financial need in FFY2010. During FFY2010 and FFY2011, ARRA funding was used to fund this policy change through September 30, 2011. Due to advancements in AT over the past three years, new training opportunities and jobs have opened to individuals who are blind or visually impaired with use of AT. Therefore, the agency recommended that the practice of purchasing required AT without regard to economic remain in place after the expiration of ARRA funds, which was approved by the State Rehabilitation Council.

Goal 2: Assistive technology staff in all seven District Offices will receive training on latest software and hardware to enhance placement opportunities.

Objective (a): Provide training for the Rehabilitation Engineer, Assistive Technology Consultants, and Assistive Technology teachers and instructors about new and innovative products.

Objective (b): Partner with the NC Assistive Technology Project and the NC Rehabilitation Association to sponsor the 2012 "GREAT" (Global Rehabilitation Enhanced by Assistive Technology) (formerly the NC Assistive Technology Expo) to be held December 5-7, 2012, and identify at least two presentations about access technology for individuals who are blind or who have visual impairments.

PRIORITY 3: TRANSITION SERVICES WILL BE AVAILABLE IN ALL COUNTIES OF NORTH CAROLINA FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED.

Goal 1: The Division will continue to provide transition services to students who are blind or visually impaired attending schools in all 115 Local Education Agencies (LEA's) of North Carolina.

The goal will be to increase the number of individuals, ages 14-21, served by 2% (baseline for FFY2011: 290)

Objective (a) Current Cooperative Agreements with fifteen LEAs' will be maintained, as economic instability continues and projected budget shortfalls are projected to increase in the next fiscal year. LEA's in North Carolina are searching for programs to cut in order to preserve their own staffs.

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Objective (b) Transition services to students attending schools without Division Cooperative Agreements will be served by Division VR counselors in the counties where the schools are located.

Goal 2: The Division will provide continuing education training for transition program staff.

Objective (a) Transition Staff that have enrolled in *Certificate in Transition* with Winston-Salem State University will complete the program.

Objective (b) All Transition Staff will complete training in the *Discovery Process* provided Southeast Regional TACE program, so they can begin to use the process with the students in their programs during this Fiscal Year.

Objective (c) The Program Specialist for Transition Services will continue to have transition staff meetings and/or provide ongoing trainings quarterly to increase staff awareness and knowledge about transition issues and policy.

Goal 3: Each Rehabilitation Counselor in areas where specialized transition programs are not available will increase awareness of opportunities for internships and work experiences for transition age students.

Objective (a) Provide current information about opportunities for transition age individuals on the agency's web-page or other media

Objective (b) Provide training to new Rehabilitation Counselors on Transition Services available to eligible students on their caseloads

Objective (c) Program Specialist for Transition Services and the Transition Counselor in each area will continue to be available for consultation regarding transition services

PRIORITY 4: QUALITY AND KNOWLEDGEABLE OUTREACH TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, FAMILY MEMBERS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES WILL BE PROVIDED BY DSB.

Goal 1: The Division's services will be provided to individuals, families, and minority populations through targeted outreach activities.

Objective (a): Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are Hispanics/Latinos by 2% during the period October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2013. (The baseline for FFY 2011 was 140)

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Objective (b): Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served from the African American, Native Americans and other minority groups by 2% from October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2013. (The baseline for FFY 2011 was a total of 1526, 1446 African-American, 80 Native American)

Goal 2: The Division will develop marketing opportunities to targeted audiences.

Objective (a): The Division will utilize social media as a method for Division VR Counselors to communicate with employers with the goal of establishing relationships with five new employers through this network.

Objective (b): The Division will use the available employer portal in BEAM, the new case management system, to establish contact with employers who would like to post job opportunities, with the goal of having ten job opportunities posted after the initiation of the system in October, 2012.

Goal 3: The Division will identify ways by which the Division can assist veterans with disabilities to become able to obtain, maintain or regain employment.

Objective: Through contacts with the Veterans Administration, Disabled Veterans of America, and the American Legion, The Division will educate these organizations on ways the Division can assist veterans through a continuum of independent living and employment services.

Goal 4: The Division will continually seek and identify ways in which to reach the growing minority populations across North Carolina.

Objective (a): Increase the number of the Division employees who are of an ethnic or racial minority by 2.5 percent for FFY 2013.

Objective (b): During FFY 2013, eight Division staff will utilize the Spanish training modules to acquire some level of proficiency in speaking and/or understanding Spanish.

PRIORITY 5: OVER THE NEXT THREE FISCAL YEARS, DEVELOPMENT OF SYSTEMATIC PROGRAM EVALUATIONS AND CONSISTENT QUALITY ASSURANCE METHODS WILL ASSURE THE AGENCY IS MEETING THE MISSION OF ENABLING INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS OF INDEPENDENCE AND EMPLOYMENT.

Goal 1: To provide consistent and accurate data for use for assessing program performance.

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Objective (a): The agency will provide refresher training, support, and problem-solving upon the scheduled “go-live” of October 1, 2012, for the agency’s new case management system, BEAM. All issues regarding BEAM use by staff using assistive technology will be resolved during the first year of its use.

Objective (b): Monthly reviews of outcome data by rehabilitation program chiefs and managers was completed with supervisors and other program staff.

Goal 2: To provide holistic, consistent, and accurate methods of quality assurance and program evaluation.

Objective (a): Develop an up-to- date Quality Assurance Manual outline identifying areas requiring specific methods of quality assurance based on outcome measures with consideration of BEAM. The manual will be written and in place with staff during FFY2013.

Objective (b): To obtain reviews and input from all program managers to develop draft methods to achieve holistic, consistent, and accurate measures.

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.

Title VI, Part B funds will be utilized to purchase supported employment services from providers of supported employment in North Carolina. The Division utilizes private nonprofit Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) throughout North Carolina by accessing CRPs already available in the individual’s local community. The expanded program is designed to provide the individual more choice of supported employment programs they can use and to serve eligible individuals from all 100 counties in North Carolina, through the Supported Employment Job Development model of integrated employment.

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind subscribes to the following FY 2013 supported employment goals:

In all 100 counties, the Division plans to identify individuals with disabilities that have traditionally been underserved and not served, who will require Supported Employment services in order to achieve a successful employment outcome by using the following objectives:

1. Provide ongoing training to Rehabilitation Counselors to help them identify and refer individuals with the most significant disabilities for Supported Employment services.
2. The Division’s Program Specialist will continue to provide training to Community Rehabilitation Program staff, information about working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired to assist in job development and placement.

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3. Community Rehabilitation Programs will identify individuals with the most significant disabilities who want to work, and refer them to the Division for vocational rehabilitation services, which may include Supported Employment services.
4. During Fiscal Year 2013, the Division plans to close twenty (20) individuals indicating successful employment outcomes (Status 26) after receiving Supported Employment services.

4.11(d) State's Strategies

**PRIORITY 1: INCREASE THE AVERAGE WAGES AND BENEFITS OF INDIVIDUALS
CLOSED WITH SUCCESSFUL WAGE-EARNING EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES**

Through use of the DSB-sponsored internship program, DSB staff will have opportunities to obtain employment for eligible individual that have recently completed post-secondary training or vocational trades training. These opportunities will benefit both eligible individual and employer. A newly trained eligible individual can gain work experience in the field of their training while the employer has an opportunity to ensure the individual is a match for the job. These opportunities give newly training individuals a competitive edge with the increased number of applicants for jobs who have experience in the field due to current job market conditions that include company closings layoffs, and job losses. DSB will reimburse the employer up to 100% of the wages and benefits contribution during the internship without requiring a commitment of hiring at the end of the internship. The number of hours worked during the week can be 20 to 40 hours, with a maximum of 1,000 hours per internship. If all interns work a maximum amount of 40 hours per week, the maximum amount paid for these internships will be \$190,000.

The community-based work adjustment services will continue to be available to staff through local community rehabilitation programs (CRP's) as a resource for those individuals who require short-term job coaching to be successful on a job, but do not required long-term support. Although this service was initiated during FFY2010, both CRP's and DSB VR staff are in the process of initiating its use. During FFY2012, staff will receive more information about the program's advantages for successful employment outcomes for targeted individuals. The estimated amount of funds to be expended for this strategy is \$45,000.

The 2010 Census identified one of the fastest growing segments of the job market in North Carolina as the older worker. This year, statewide as well as district office training will place emphasis on identifying transferable skills, utilizing all low vision and other assistive technology, and other skills needed to effectively provide placements for the older worker. Offices will be encouraged to direct to share information regarding employers who offer higher wages and career advancement opportunities, and now opportunities for older workers. The estimated amount of funds to be expended for this strategy is \$15,000.

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PRIORITY 2: ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT) AS REQUIRED FOR EMPLOYMENT.

The Division will plan to provide all assistive technology, to include low vision devices and mobility aids required for employment (including training for employment) without regard to financial eligibility. This was done through a temporary rule change during FFY2010 and FFY2011, and it is observed that those who needed equipment and were not financially eligible were young individuals headed towards training and education for higher paying jobs. A change required a State APA Rule change, and a temporary rule change was granted that will allow these purchases through FFY2012. This will allow the agency to process this temporary rule to a permanent one. Rehabilitation Counselors will be educated regarding appropriate use of this rule for required equipment, and purchases will be monitored. The estimated amount of funds to be expended for this strategy is \$300,000.

The Division will be a contributing sponsor at the 2012 Global Rehabilitation Enhanced with Assistive Technology (GREAT), hosted by the NC Assistive Technology Program and the NC Rehabilitation Association in December, 2012. A DSB AT Consultant will serve on the planning committee, and at least two presentations about access technology for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The conference also sponsors a vendor expo with many vendors, with over 25% being vendors with products for persons who are blind or visually impaired. All Division AT Consultants (6), Rehabilitation Engineer (1), AT Instructors (4), Technology teacher (1), and Rehabilitation Center AT Instructors (3) will be sponsored to attend this expo.

In conjunction with this conference, the Division will sponsor two-day training for AT staff to study new products. Topics being considered are use of alternative products, new uses of existing products, and demonstration of a difficult job modification. The estimated amount of funds to be expended for both of these strategies is \$6,500.

PRIORITY 3: TRANSITION SERVICES WILL BE AVAILABLE IN ALL COUNTIES OF NORTH CAROLINA FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED.

The Division is partnering with the Southeastern Region TACE program to provide training in the *Discovery* Process for all Transition VR Counselors and Community Employment Specialists working the third-party Transition Programs. Selected staff members of the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind who work closely with the Transition Program to provide summer programs for eligible students at the Center will also participate in this training so the *Discovery* Process can be coordinated with the Center.

The Program Specialist for Transition will work with the Division's VR Counselors who provide services in counties with no third-party agreement with the schools, but work with students in the

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areas they cover on opportunities available to all students such as the summer programs as well as internships or On-the-job Training Programs (OJT). The program specialist will also meet with this staff help them keep current with best practices when working with transition age students.

PRIORITY 4: QUALITY AND KNOWLEDGEABLE OUTREACH TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, FAMILY MEMBERS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES WILL BE PROVIDED BY DSB.

The Division will continue to participate in outreach activities in all areas of North Carolina as opportunities arise. Activities in previous years have had to be cut due to budget restraints. The Division has a staff member in each area that is responsible for identifying activities, and reports will be made of each event.

Utilizing the Memorandums of Agreement established with the Lumbee Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the Eastern Cherokee Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program outreach and services provided to Native Americans will be increased. Contacts with the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, which is located in the counties of Lumbee Tribal communities, will be maintained to provide consultation and cooperation between these programs.

The Division will use social media (as approved by the NC Department of Health and Human Resources) as a tool to reach potential employers. It will also be a resource and method of staying in touch with organizations, individuals and other sources of reaching the unserved and underserved.

BEAM, the agency's new electronic data system, provides a portal for employers to communicate with the Division's VR staff, as well as to find information they may need in regard to their staff that may be blind or have a visual impairment. The Program Specialist for Job Development and Job Placement will continue to participate on a committee for the completion of access to this portal for employers. During FFY2013, the Program Specialist will work with supervisors and the Division's VR staff about educating employers regarding the use of the portal.

The Division will utilize the EEO Plan to ensure that applicants for positions who are of a minority population are considered and their cultural and ethnic skill background is considered in the hiring process. For example, those who are fluent in Spanish will greatly assist in outreach to the Latino population.

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The Division will continue to provide employees access to Spanish language tutorials for learning this language skill. Introductory skills can assist in the initiation of service provision.

PRIORITY 5: OVER THE NEXT THREE FISCAL YEARS (BEGINNING IN FFY2010), THE DIVISION WILL DEVELOP A SYSTEMATIC METHOD OF PROGRAM EVALUATION AND CONSISTENT QUALITY ASSURANCE METHODS TO ASSURE THE AGENCY IS MEETING THE AGENCY'S MISSION AND VISION.

The Division will provide on-going training and follow-up to all staff in the use of the agency's new data system, BEAM, ensuring total accessibility for all users. The field AT staff is to be trained as "on-site" help desk assistants to work with staff that is AT users to ensure accurate usage and to provide immediate assistance.

The draft Quality Assurance Manual has been delayed due to introduction of new business rules (still in development) with regard to BEAM. The electronic case management system and data collection system is totally new to the Division's environment, and its capabilities and accessibility is still unknown. Manuals developed by other states and data gathered by ongoing studies will be used as the Manual is developed.

All training for new Rehabilitation Counselors will contain a segment on quality services.

4.11(e)(2) Evaluation of Goals and Priorities for FFY 2011

The agency's priorities in FFY2011 included:

- (1) Increasing the average wages and benefits of individuals closed with successful wage-earning employment outcomes,
- (2) Ensuring access to assistive technology (AT) for all eligible individuals who require AT for employment,
- (3) Providing transition services to all students who are blind or visually impaired individuals, especially in rural areas,
- (4) Providing information to reach individuals with disabilities, family members and individuals who are minorities, especially those with most significant disabilities, to increase knowledge about DSB services, and
- (5) Developing systematic program evaluation and consistent quality assurance methods.

PRIORITY 1: INCREASE THE AVERAGE WAGES AND BENEFITS OF INDIVIDUALS CLOSED WITH SUCCESSFUL WAGE-EARNING EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

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During FFY2011, the Division initiated and completed services according to the identified goals and objectives. Numerically the outcomes do not indicate the desired increase in wages and benefits when looking at just FFY2011. However, staff is more aware of this priority, and it is felt that by assessing the progress over a three year period, progress can be seen. North Carolina, especially in the rural areas, continues to experience high unemployment rates. Staff turnover due to lack of salary increases in four years has greatly affected these outcomes, as well as the retirements of experienced counselors. Retirements will remain an issue over the next three years. However, new staff is trained with this priority as their mission. With the initiation of the Division's new case management system during FFY2013, it is felt data collection will be more readily available, allowing for closer and frequent monitoring.

Goal 1: Individuals who are blind or visually impaired in North Carolina will have access to employment opportunities that provide good wages and level of benefits.

Objective (a): The Division's staff obtained placements for eligible individuals who recently completed post-secondary training or occupational education through continuation of ARRA On-The-Job Training (ARRA OJT).

During FFY2011, seven individuals were placed in jobs using ARRA OJT Program. Two individuals maintained in these jobs after the end of the OJT period and became successful employment outcomes with wages that highly exceeded the Division's average income at closure for FFY2011. Three individuals continue working under this program, and should become successful employment outcomes for FFY2012. After the expiration of ARRA funding on September 30, 2011, management agreed this type of OJT will be continued in FFY2012 and FFY2013 (with some minor changes) through Title 1 funds. The name will be changed to the "Intern Program". Policy was adapted and approved by the State Rehabilitation Council. Therefore, this will remain a strategy through September, 2013, with the goal of four placements that result in closures and of two additional permanent job offers through use of the Intern Program.

Objective (b): The Division staff utilized community-based work adjustment services through community rehabilitation programs for eligible individuals who require this service for successful employment. It is a resource for individuals who need short-term job coaching to be successful on the job, but do not require long-term support services afforded by supported employment services. During FFY2011, seven new referrals were made, 13 individuals received services, six were placed into competitive employment, and five achieved successful employment outcomes.

Goal 2: Increase staff knowledge about careers and employment opportunities in the State and the requirements of these positions.

Objective (a): Training experiences were provided for all Division VR counselors, business representatives and community employment specialists about career opportunities in North

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Carolina's changing economy to included segments on job analysis and use of assistive technology. Division's Assistive Technology Staff presented quarterly meetings in each of their offices regarding new products and new types of job modifications using assistive technology. Emphasis was placed on the use of I-Phones and I-Pods with applications designed for persons with low vision or blindness.

Objective (b): An office plan in each seven district offices for contacting businesses in the locations that targets employers offering higher wages and career advancement was developed. During FFY2011, each office met with the Employment Services Specialist to develop a plan. This plan was stressed by the supervisors and the business services representatives in the offices throughout the year.

Objective (c): One-on-one training by the Program Specialist for Job Development and Placement was provided to each rehabilitation counselor and business representative that consisted of job coaching through at least one employer interview. In addition, this Program Specialist provided one on one training and interview coaching with each new staff this year.

Goal 3: Increase Community Rehabilitation Counselor awareness of opportunities for internships and other work experiences for transition age students, especially in areas where specialized transition programs are not available.

Objective (a): The Division continues to maintain a section on its web page that will include information about opportunities for transition-age and college age students for job internship opportunities, work experiences, conferences and ideas, as maintained by the Program Specialist for Transition with contributions made by the specialized transition programs staff.

Objective (b): Training sessions have been provided to Rehabilitation Counselors in all the district offices on focusing on Transition services and resources that available to eligible students attending schools.

PRIORITY 2: ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT) REQUIRED FOR EMPLOYMENT

Goal 1: Provide access technology for all eligible individuals who require specific equipment and software in order to obtain, maintain and regain employment.

Objective (a): Purchase of technology, using ARRA funds, for eligible individuals has been made without regard to financial eligibility when the AT was required for success in reaching the individual's vocational goal. Currently, limitations of Division's legacy data collection system do not provide accurate data for measuring the changes in AT purchases, as financial eligibility

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is not recorded. A survey of Division AT Field staff and a review of Satisfaction Surveys indicate the ability to sponsor equipment for individuals that opened doors towards training opportunities that lead to employment opportunities. A total of 402 persons were provided assistive technology services through purchase of equipment during FFY2011. After the success of this policy change using ARRA funds (that expired September 30, 2011), a permanent rule change and policy amendment was made moving the purchase of required assistive technology to a service not dependent on economic need.

Objective (b): Training was provided training for the Assistive Technology Consultants, the Rehabilitation Engineer and the Assistive Technology teacher in alternative products during FFY2011. Twelve persons received training in the use of the screen reader product by GW Micro, Window

Eyes during November, 2010. Later that week, seventeen the Division staff was sponsored to attend the Assistive Technology Expo, a training conference and vendor display. The Division partnered with the NC Assistive Technology Project as one of the sponsors for the 2010 Expo, which was attended by over 550 AT users, professionals, students, teachers and other interested individuals. The Division staff worked on the planning committee and arranged four presentations about access technology for individuals who are blind or who have visual impairments.

PRIORITY 3: TRANSITION SERVICES WILL BE AVAILABLE IN ALL COUNTIES OF NORTH CAROLINA FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON RURAL AREAS.

Goal 1: To increase awareness of the importance of transition services for high school students and related Division services.

Objective (a): The ARRA funded temporary staff met with officials in every high school in North Carolina to provide information about the Division's transition program and identified students who could benefit from services through the Division. The staff met this goal by the date of September 20, 2011.

Objective (b): Division identified two school districts through the AARA funded outreach that had expressed some interest in establishing a Cooperative Agreement; however, due to school budget shortfalls and the school systems not in close proximity of each other, it has not been possible to create another Regional Transition Program

PRIORITY 4: INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, FAMILY MEMBERS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES WILL HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF AVAILABLE SERVICES THROUGH QUALITY OUTREACH.

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Goal 1: Expand the Division's services provided to individuals, families, and minority populations served by the Division through Targeted Outreach Activities.

Objective (a): The Division increased the percentage of total consumers served who are Hispanics/Latinos by -2.78% during the period October 1, 2010 to September 30, 2011. (Baseline: FFY2010 – 144)

Since NC ranks 18th in the state for growth in the Latino community and more growth is anticipated and ongoing outreach will continue at targeted venues frequented by this population. The Division provides targeted outreach presentations and workshops to communities of color through a series of mini center and community based workshops which include diabetes awareness programs. Diabetes is a leading cause of blindness, and so outreach is targeted to those most affected. The Division also partners with local Lions Clubs to do outreach to individuals who are experiencing vision loss secondary to diabetes and other etiologies. Outreach to individuals with diabetes was recommended in the 2009 Comprehensive Needs Assessment Conducted by East Carolina University. At the time of this recommendation, the Division had been involved in this type of outreach to minorities using a variety of methods since 2006. Faith based organizations were targeted for outreach to minorities and well as cultural events such as El Pueblo where large numbers of minorities gather to celebrate, educate and participate in various events. Of the 248 outreach events held, 40% were to minority communities. Outreach has been more effective when presenting services from the perspective of the relationship between diabetes and obesity since minorities are disproportionately affected by these conditions. The number of individuals served who reported Hispanic/Latino heritage was 140.

Objective (b): Increase the percentage of total consumers served from the African American, Native Americans and other minority groups by -2.98% from October 1, 2010 to September 30, 2011. (Baseline: FFY2010 – 1,573) Approximately 100,000 North Carolinians are Native American representing 2% of the current population. Culturally sensitive educational and outreach presentations have occurred in various tribal events specifically targeting Pow Wows, community resource centers, mental health centers, conferences, as well as on the Cherokee Reservation. 11 events were held by the Division to share information on services using diabetes awareness as the portal of entry to the community. Native Americans have a prevalence of diabetes that is 5-50 times greater than the general community. Presentations were effective in educating those affected by vision loss secondary to diabetes and other medical conditions. The Division also featured a popular, highly respected Native American woman in the radio and television commercials aired across the state and on the website. The number of individuals served who reported African-American heritage was 1446 and the number served who reported Native American heritage was 80 with the total number served as 1526.

Goal 2: Develop marketing opportunities to targeted audiences using ARRA funding.

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Objective (a): The Division completed the process of developing two videos that targeted the general public and potential employers respectively to be used as television commercials during the 2011 FFY and on the agency's website. The Division contracted with a media company to produce a multi-media campaign using ARRA funds. The campaign included a 30 second advertisement aired on all major TV stations across NC, a 30 second radio advertisement both in English and Spanish, and a 3 minute video which is being used for presentations and on our web site.

The TV advertisement was developed to target the general population to inform them of our services and how to contact us. We tried to narrow the focus of our target audience to individuals of employment age, as well as family members. The individuals who were in the advertisement were actual consumers telling about their experience with losing their vision and how the Division helped them. The 30 second radio advertisement was similar in content but the targeted audience was individuals of minority populations. This was accomplished through the radio stations chosen to air the advertisement. The media company selected Gospel, Spanish, and English stations. Two of the English stations were stations with a high number of Native American listeners.

The campaign began in early March and continued through May. The time of day the advertisements were aired were selected to reach the greatest number of our targeted audiences and the radio and TV ads alternated so that both were not shown at the same times.

In early June our Television and radio ad campaign ended. We were able to identify that 770 individuals who contacted our agency during the campaign regarding services, stated they learned about DSB through our advertisements. Through our purchased media buy, we were able to obtain, "added value". This was additional advertising at no cost. This included such things as, additional viewing of our ad, advertising on the web site of several television stations, and participation in a, well attended, health fair sponsored by one of the largest viewed television stations. The estimated amount for the added value was \$80,000. We have received feedback from individuals across the state who said they saw or heard our ad on TV and felt it was a good way to let people know about our services. We also heard many people tell staff that the ad was well done but some felt that 30 seconds was too short.

Through the assistance of the video production contractor we developed a social media site on Linked-In. We are hoping that through this site we can continue to spread information about the Division to individuals, especially employers, across North Carolina.

The 3 minute video was developed as a marketing tool to target employers. The video provides testimonials of three consumers about their experience of vision loss, seeking a job, and becoming employed. They describe the type of work they do and shows them at work. The video also highlights their supervisors, who talk about their experiences of hiring someone who

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is visually impaired and the support they received from the Division. We have received very positive feedback from many people on the quality and content of the video. You can view the video at www.ncdhhs.gov/dsb. Go to the EMPLOYER SERVICES link.

The total cost of the media campaign was \$355,742.

Objective (b): The Division developed three agency brochures aimed at the general public, employers and transition services.

A general brochure was designed that highlights all the services provided by the Division. This brochure was printed in large print and will be used at all outreach events, given to medical providers for their clients, veterans' organizations, churches, and other organizations for them to give out.

An employer brochure was developed that highlights the business services that the Division can offer employers and the advantages of working with the Division to find a qualified dependable employee. This brochure targets any business or employer. These will be used at outreach events, conferences, and when staff meets with employers. As well as sending them to employers along with a letter of introduction.

A transition flyer was also developed and put on the Division's web site. This flyer let's parents and students know about transition services and how to contact their local office to learn more. This flyer can be printed off the web site and used as a resource for outreach events, conferences, or when meeting with education professionals, parents, and students.

The total cost for printing the two brochures was \$5,740.

Goal 3: Identify a plan with strategies by which the Division can assist veterans with disabilities to become able to obtain, maintain or regain employment.

Objective (a): The Division through contacts with the Veterans Administration, Disabled Veterans of America, and the American Legion. The Division provided targeted outreach to veterans across the state. This has taken place in both the state and federal veterans' administration programs across the state.

This outreach has specifically targeted training to VA physicians, medical social workers, podiatrists, ophthalmologists, nurses, pharmacists, diabetes educators and other VA staff in an effort to educate this enormous program on the valuable services provided by the Division to veterans experiencing vision loss. The Division to serve NC's veterans, and a link was added to the VA on the Division's website, and NC VA added a link to the Division's website as well for greater awareness and accessibility.

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Brochures are displayed publically at VA facilities across the state and referrals are being made. In addition, the Division has participated in statewide conferences hosted by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Marines and the American Legions. The Division remains committed to partnering with veterans services to serve individuals requiring adjustment training services to effectively manage loss of vision. Over 23 formal events were held with the veterans during this time with multiple smaller networking opportunities occurring throughout the year. DSB periodically follows up with the VA to keep the lines of communication open and fluid to ensure adequate service delivery to eligible veterans.

Goal 4: Identify ways in which to reach the growing minority populations across North Carolina.

Objective (a): The division developed a plan of targeted outreach to reach growing minority communities. Consequently the Division developed materials and presentations specifically for communities of color. Since minority communities are disproportionately affected by illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and vascular disease, minorities are at risk for greater rates of vision loss. The following steps will be implemented to reach minority communities:

1. Focus on faith based outreach by participating in health fairs, presenting to congregations, and participating in other related events.
2. A Spanish-speaking employee will be employed by the Division
3. The number of Division employees who speak Spanish will be increased.
4. The Division will participate in community cultural events.
5. The Division will make outreach events accessible through the use of foreign language interpreters and the provision of publications in Spanish as needed.
6. The Division will provide outreach to programs serving minorities with health disparities.

PRIORITY 5: OVER THE NEXT THREE FISCAL YEARS, DEVELOPMENT OF SYSTEMATIC PROGRAM EVALUATIONS AND CONSISTENT QUALITY ASSURANCE METHODS WILL ASSURE THE AGENCY IS MEETING THE MISSION OF ENABLING INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS OF INDEPENDENCE AND EMPLOYMENT.

Goal 1: To provide consistent and accurate data for use for assessing program performance.

Objective (a): The agency provided training and follow-up to all staff in the use of the agency's new case management system, BEAM, ensuring total accessibility for all users in April, 2011, and September, 2011. The vendor, Libera, provided this training. Modifications for individual agency use, along with complications of modifications to meet the requirements of the other two agencies have delayed the "go-live" date for over a year and a half, which is now scheduled for October 1, 2012. Retraining plans are now being developed for refresher training.

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Objective (b): Monthly reviews of outcome data by rehabilitation program chiefs and managers was completed with supervisors and other program staff.

Goal 2: To provide holistic, consistent, and accurate methods of quality assurance and program evaluation.

Objective (a): Work continues to be done in the development of a Quality Assurance Manual outline identifying areas requiring specific methods of quality assurance based on outcome measures. Input from supervisors and program managers have been gathered. However due to anticipated changes in business practices associated with BEAM, the completion of this manual is delayed until the final BEAM product and business practice policies are in place. The manual will be written and in place with staff during FFY2013.

Objective (b): To obtain reviews and input from all program managers to develop draft methods to achieve holistic, consistent, and accurate measures. This objective began in FFY2011 as part of the development and training for BEAM. Measures will be developed during this process.

6.3 Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

Quality

The Division's supported employment services program is more cost effective since it was converted to performance-based outcomes, and eligible individuals are able to achieve their employment goals more quickly.

The Division's supported employment services program through policy changes, purchase of supported employment services from private nonprofit Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP's), good practice guidelines, updated training and technical assistance to Division staff, and training to private nonprofit CRP staff, employers, eligible individuals, families and advocates, has moved the program towards improved the quality of services.

Quality outcomes emphasize achievement of a successful stable employment outcome as determined by the individual, the Division's VR counselor, the CRP job coach, and the employer. Stable employment is achieved when all four parties agree that stabilization has occurred. The individual is encouraged to exercise informed choice in determining if a quality outcome has been achieved. The Division's objective is for the individual to make employment choices consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests in the most integrated setting possible.

The Division assures that the extended long term support services identified on the Individualized Plan for Employment are provided by the contracted private nonprofit organization to begin when stabilization has been determined and to continue for as long as the individual requires the service.

Scope

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The scope of supported employment services includes all of the Division's services provided under Title I, and in addition, the coordination of extended long term support services and the development of natural supports. The expanded scope of supported employment long term supports requires a continuation of the Division's involvement in the coordination and collaboration with the private nonprofit CRP's, employers and families. Post-employment services are provided when supports and services needed by the individual exceed the responsibility of the extended long term support services provider.

Extent

The Division, purchases supported employment services from private nonprofit CRP's in the individual's locality, offers supported employment services to eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities in all 100 counties of the state. In addition, supported employment services are available to high school students participating in the Division's transition programs in all 100 counties if required for successful employment outcomes.

The Division continues to identify more private nonprofit CRP's for the development of contracts to provide supported employment services. This will allow eligible individuals to have more choices available to them for supported employment services that can assist them in reaching their employment goals.

The Division's extended long term services are provided in three phases to allow the individual choices in the level of service desired and required to achieve longevity of employment. The individual makes the final decision about their movement through the phases of extended services. The phases of extended long term services are:

Phase 1: The CRP providing the extended services meets with the individual twice monthly at the place of employment for at least 6 months. When the six month period ends, the CRP, the individual, and the employer review the individual's progress. If all parties agree that the individual is performing the job without any difficulties and no other problems are present with the placement, the individual can move to the next phase. This action requires the individual's signature on a waiver for this change in level of service. If the individual feels that they are not ready to move to the next phase, then they remain in Phase 1. An individual can remain any phase indefinitely.

Phase 2: The CRP meets with the individual at the place of employment at least once every six months for at least 2 years to review progress of placement. The meetings can take place more often if necessary to resolve any minor problems. After 2 years, another review is conducted with the individual, the CRP, and the employer. If all agree that the individual remains stable in the placement, they can move to the last phase. The movement requires the signature of the individual on a waiver agreeing to the move.

Phase 3: The individual and employer understand that if a problem occurs, the CRP will be contacted to meet and to complete an assessment of the problem. If the problem can be resolved quickly with short-term intervention such as a few visits, the individual will remain in this phase. If the problem is new or difficult to resolve without the Division's intervention, the individual

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will be referred back to the Division for further assistance. The goal of this action is to allow the individual to either retain the job or to begin the process for obtaining new employment in the quickest and most effective manner as to minimize the interruption of employment. The Division will, at the time of the referral, make a determination whether the problem can be resolved in Status 32, Post Employment Services or whether a new case will be required.

The Division is continually striving towards improving its supported employment program to provide the best service possible to the individual. Therefore, the Division uses the following strategies to work towards this objective.

- Identify additional private nonprofit CRP's with supported employment service programs to expand its supported employment program and to provide eligible individuals with more choices of service providers available to them.
- Provide training to new CRP vendors with the Division's supported employment program to assist them in working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired.
- Provide ongoing training to CRP staff already working with the Division's supported employment program.
- Develop natural supports for its individuals to assist them in becoming more independent in their communities, to include self-pay, co-workers, employers, and family/friends.