

**State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and
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State Plan Required and Supplemental Attachments 2015

- 4.2 (c) Summaries of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit: and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations
- 4.8 (b) (1) Cooperation with Agencies That Are Not in the Statewide Workforce Investment System and with Other Entities
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**Attachment 4.8(b)(1) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out
Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment System**

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) has established cooperative and collaborative working relationships with various federal, state and local agencies and organizations in our mission to help blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind citizens of North Carolina receive the most comprehensive and beneficial services and supports available to facilitate their vocational and independent living goals. Many of the agencies and organizations with whom the Division collaborates are carrying out activities under the Statewide Workforce Investment System.

DSB has a cooperative agreement with the NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The agreement with DPI establishes coordination for the provision of educational and transitional services to students with visual impairments.

DSB has a cooperative agreement with the University of North Carolina System (UNC). DSB partners with UNC's Department of Allied Sciences in support of the university's rehabilitation counseling program. This includes the programs on campuses of UNC-Chapel Hill, Winston-Salem State University, A&T State University, East Carolina University, and North Carolina Central University campuses. The Division provides clinical experiences for students in the program through DSB district offices and the residential rehabilitation facility. DSB and UNC mutually plan and schedule student assignments. The Division provides students training and supervision, mentoring, constructive feedback and formal evaluations. Students are also provided office and work space, use of computers and other office equipment and technology, and exposure to other professions in the field rehabilitation such as, orientation and mobility, low vision, social work and medical eye care. UNC provides DSB staff opportunities to participate in clinical education conferences and meetings. This collaborative relationship also creates potential employment opportunities for students upon the completion of their education.

The Division has informal collaborative relationships with other organizations and consumer and advocacy groups that are not carrying out activities under the Statewide Workforce Investment System such as the Governor Morehead School, NC Association of Blind Students, Governor Morehead School Alumni Association, NC Library for the

Blind and Physically Handicapped, North Carolina Lions Inc., NC Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired and Prevent Blindness

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NC. DSB and the organizations and groups collaborate in referrals for services and supports, sharing information and resources, sponsorship and participation in trainings and events, outreach and educating the general public about blindness and vision loss and increasing the general public's awareness of the needs and abilities of individuals who have visual disabilities.

DSB is one of the designated state units (DSUs) that serve as a part of the NC Statewide Independent Living Council (NC SILC). NC SILC in collaboration with the DSUs develops three-year State Plans for Independent Living (SPILs). DSB actively engages with the SILC in the development of goals, objectives and measures to help meet the independent living needs of North Carolinians who have disabilities. These entities serve together on various work groups and committees such as governance, community based living, youth leadership forum, evaluation, civil rights and IL services and supports. The work groups and committees address matters and complete the tasks and activities required to achieve the goals and desired outcomes stated in the SPIL. A SILC member serves on the DSB State Rehabilitation Council.

Cooperative and collaborative relationships have been established between NC Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and DSB. Consumers are referred by and to each entity, relevant information is shared, CILs allows DSB the use of facilities for DSB to provide consumers community-based independent living skills training and in return DSB staff provides CIL staff in-service training pertaining to visual disabilities. DSB provides consumers individual advocacy skills training and refers to the CILs for systems change advocacy needs.

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

DSB provides transition rehabilitation services for students in North Carolina who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired. Each student served by the Division of Services for the Blind VR program must have an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) approved by a qualified DSB rehabilitation counselor. The IPE incorporates transitional elements of the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), along with the student's plans for transitioning from secondary school to employment. DSB transition staff and VR counselors are expected to participate in student IEP meetings pertaining to transition matters. Local school systems provide students services that are within its legal responsibility and customary practice. These services are provided without cost to the Division. DSB provides transitional and supportive services that are not available through the local school systems. All costs for services for which a student is found eligible is paid for through DSB vocational rehabilitation case service funds.

A formal cooperative agreement exists with the NC Department of Public Instruction, which consists of 115 local education agencies (LEA's), 128 charter schools, 1 regional school and 2 education entities. The emphasis of the Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Public Instruction is on students who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired, being served by local education agencies (LEA's) and the schools who are of transition age (14 to 21) and who need vocational rehabilitation services to become employed. This agreement acknowledges the role of DSB in providing these services and encourages local LEA's and schools to develop working relationships with the staff who cover their corresponding areas and encourages referring students, sharing information and facilitating joint involvement in IEP meetings. DSB shares information about the transition program and provides technical assistance and consultation to DPI, LEA's, and schools regarding accommodations and assistive technology that will help facilitate the education and vocational rehabilitation of students who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired.

DSB has agreements with twelve LEA's and one regional school across the state. These agreements designate cost sharing of transition staff positions (rehabilitation counselor and community employment specialist), the duties of these positions and the services to be provided by both parties in meeting the needs of transition age students. The school systems with whom DSB continues to have agreements are Brunswick County, Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, Cumberland County, Edgecombe County, Guilford County, New Hanover County, Onslow County, Pender County, Pitt County,

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Wake County Schools, Wilson County, Winston-Salem-Forsyth County Schools and the Governor Morehead School for the Blind.

While DSB's goal is that ultimately all eligible students will be served by specialized transition counselors through formal cooperative agreements with the schools, DPI and local LEA budgetary restraints have prevented expansion of cost sharing for transition positions. Studies have demonstrated that students, who are blind, deaf-blind or visually impaired benefit from earlier identification and referral to the transition counselors and access to available services and supports. Such partnerships enable the counselor to develop stronger working relationships with the students, family and the school staff with greater knowledge of the available resources and supports within the school district. Opportunities to participate more fully in the student's individualized education planning process are also more readily available.

Transition students are served by DSB community vocational rehabilitation counselors in schools where DSB does not have formal cooperative agreements with the LEA's. Vocational rehabilitation counselors develop and cultivate working relationships with school systems by educating them about the transition and vocational services available through DSB and providing technical assistance and consultation pertaining to the needs of and resources available to transition students.

Due to the growth of charter schools, private schools, and home-school organizations, DSB is reaching out to these entities to provide resources for any student who is blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind. While most students do attend public schools due to the resources of specialized teachers for persons with visual impairments, DSB recognizes the importance to reach students enrolled in these programs.

Therefore, DSB will continue its outreach efforts and collaboration with school districts to develop and implement formal cooperative agreements and transition programs in other locations throughout the state.

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

DSB purchases supported employment services, extended services, and community based work adjustment services from Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) for individuals who will require the assistance of a job coach to find a job, to learn the duties of the job, to develop acceptable work habits, and to provide long term support to insure the individual is able to retain the job if required by the individual. The CRP must meet certain requirements before services are purchased. The Contractor will maintain accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), Council on Accreditation (COA), or other accreditation by a DSB approved national accrediting authority will be a vendor with the state of North Carolina and will accept payments for services provided through an outcome based program.

DSB 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's phasing system for long term follow up. The Contractor provides extended services and ongoing support services through individual contacts on the schedule as listed below. The contractor bills DSB for these contacts and follows the phases of DSB'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 a provision is put in place on the individual's original or amended IPE for off-site monitoring.

Phase 2: At the end of 6 months, the contractor, individual and employer will make determination as to the individual's stabilization on the job. If ongoing support is required by the individual to maintain employment, ongoing support of two monthly contacts can condition. If and when the individual is determined to be well stabilized in the employment situation, an offer will be made to the individual and employer that continued monitoring could be made once every six months. If this offer is accepted by the individual and employer, the contractor must continue to monitor in the phase 2 for no less than 24 months. The individual and employer must sign a waiver acknowledging their agreement to this action during this phase.

Phase 3: When the individual has successfully completed phase 2, the contractor may offer the individual and employer an opportunity to cease regular monitoring.

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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. 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 DSB'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, the contractor can provide required services to the individual and/or employer.

DSB 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 milestones.

DSB provides the Contractor with staff training, consultation and technical assistance, as appropriate. DSB's VR Counselor coordinates individual admissions and subsequent services with the contractor. Consistent with DSB policy, the referring VR Counselor provides the Contractor with the necessary documents. DSB participates in admissions, attends subsequent staffing, and provides individual rehabilitation counseling and other rehabilitation 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 DSB Rehabilitation Program Specialist meets periodically with the CRP's personnel to provide assistance relative to standards compliance, fiscal accountability, quality of service, individual referrals, and the planning of program services for DSB individuals as identified in this contract.

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

DSB has contacted the NC Division of Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to inquire if these programs directly provide supported employment services and/or extended services. The response is that neither program provided these services.

DSB contacted NC Division of Mental Health to inquire if it provides 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.

DSB employs an outcome based method of purchasing supported employment services from private non-profit 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;
- (3) the CRP must be willing to accept DSB's milestone payment system.

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

Milestone 1: Assessment and Employment Plan

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 is paid.

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

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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 is paid.

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.

The Community Rehabilitation Program provides documentation in the form of a record of service hours provided and case notes from the Job Coach(es) to the DSB VR

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Counselor with each invoice for payment of the milestones. DSB VR counselor and individual must agree the milestone is met before payment is made.

DSB continues to contract for extended services and currently has agreements with CRPs to provide this important service. These services are paid through state funds without use of Title VI funding.

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Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

DSB's vocational rehabilitation (VR) program served 3,994 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 Hispanic/Latino populations. 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, DSB has adequate qualified rehabilitation staff positions.

Positions within DSB that fall under CSPD requirements are 32 VR counselors, 15 ILR counselors, 1 vocational evaluator, 4 VR area supervisors, 3 VR district supervisors for a total of 55 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 7.692%. 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.

DSB 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.

The breakdown of education levels for the 55 positions subject to CSPD requirements is:

- 34 with Master Degrees in Rehabilitation or Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC)

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- 16 with Master Degrees in closely related fields that are considered a “qualified rehabilitation counselor” by CSPD standards
- 6 vacancies

Currently, 100% of the 50 currently employed VR Staff meet the education standards for qualified rehabilitation counselor. Individuals who will meet the definition of “qualified rehabilitation counselor” are being recruited for all current vacancies and are hired whenever possible. DSB utilizes 18 paraprofessionals in the VR program. The breakdown is as follows: 2 rehabilitation casework assistants, 2 rehabilitation casework technicians, 7 human services placement specialists, and 7 community employment specialists. At present we have enough paraprofessionals to meet the number of eligible individuals being served. It is anticipated DSB will need 10 additional paraprofessionals in the next 5 years as numbers served increase and due to turnover.

The agency currently has 21 staff members with 30 years or more and 16 staff members with 25 years to 30 years for a total of 37 staff that could retire in the next year. Presently, DSB has the following vacancies:

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors	30	4	28
2	Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors	16	2	9
3	Vocational Evaluator	1	0	0
4	District Supervisors	3	1	0

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5	Counselor-In-Charge	3	0	0
6		0	0	0
7		0	0	0
8		0	0	0
9		0	0	0
10		0	0	0

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

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

DSB 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 DSB plan to continue partnering to provide internships for students as needed.

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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.

Row	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
1	East Carolina University (ECU),	15	0	0	0
2	A&T State University	49	0	0	7
3	Winston-Salem State University	54	2	0	8
4	University of North Carolina	40	0	0	14
5		0	0	0	0

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Describe the development (updated on an annual basis) and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the Coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and

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retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

DSB has offered unpaid internship positions for students in their last semester of a master level degree program in rehabilitation counseling. Offering internships educates students about the needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired and strengthens the pool of candidates for possible employment with DSB.

Nationwide recruitment is now done by posting positions in NeoGov, an Internet Human Resources Application Provider for Government Agencies. NeoGov has eliminated the need for numerous individual contacts to advertise available positions and has expanded the available applicant pool. A section on DSB's website labeled, "Career Opportunities" links browsers to NeoGov listings at: http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsb/aboutus/career_opp.htm. Plans have also begun to begin to alert the universities with Rehabilitation Counseling Programs to openings as posted to further encourage qualified applicants.

Among senior management and area supervisors, DSB has 2 staff members with more than 25 years of service and one vacancy. The need for succession planning was identified and steps have been taken through cross-training for all staff and training opportunities for those hoping to lead. DSB utilizes the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services leadership training as a point of entrance for pre-supervisory training. DSB conducts leadership/pre-supervisory training in an effort to begin to identify staff interested in management opportunities.

DSB uses affirmative action to insure the employment and advancement in employment of qualified individuals with disabilities. On an annual basis, DSB 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 DSB's workforce.

During their first year of employment, all rehabilitation counselors are required to complete developmental training in casework requirements and documentation. The

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chiefs of rehabilitation and the regional 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 to increase knowledge regarding working with those with a visual impairment or blindness.

Personnel Standards

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

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

Be sure to include the following:

- specific strategies for retraining, recruiting, and hiring personnel;

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

DSB policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that DSB professional and paraprofessional staff persons 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.

DSB 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

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requirements. Currently, 100% of DSB Rehabilitation Counselors meet CSPD requirements.

The requirements of education and experience for Rehabilitation Counselor I positions were developed by DSB 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 DSB is consistent with the national standard as there is no standard in North Carolina for vocational rehabilitation professionals. On October 1, 2008, DSB initiated a more comprehensive standard. For a Rehabilitation Counselor I, this standard will include a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling; a master's 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. DSB 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's 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, DSB 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.

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If qualified applicants cannot be found after extensive recruitment, DSB will consider applicants who have a closely related master of counseling degree with an additional requirement to complete courses as they relate to the CSPD requirement.

Staff Development

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

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

DSB's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by DSB receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

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

DSB has an ongoing comprehensive system for personnel development that provides all staff classifications with appropriate job-related training. Staff members complete Learning Request Forms yearly to identify specific training needs. The Program Specialist for Staff Development 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. DSB has developed and presented intensive training sessions this year.

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Staff attended trainings many of which were developed as in-service trainings included:

- Administrative Professionals Certificate Training
- Assistive Technology
- BEAM-System 7 Training- All Staff Statewide
- Best Practices for DSB's New Rehabilitation Counselors
- Business Service Representative Training
- Community Collaboration and Training Forum
- CPR Training
- CFNC.ORG Training Sessions
- DHHS Leadership Training
- Employment Opportunities Professional Training
- National Equipment Deaf-Blind Training Program
- National Transition Conference
- New Employee Sensitivity Training
- North Carolina Conference on Visual Impairment and Blindness (NCCVIB) in collaboration with Governor Morehead School for the Blind, and the NC Department of Public Instruction
- North Carolina Deaf Blind Association Conference
- Orientation & Mobility at SOMA Conference
- Pre-Supervisory Training
- Professional and Personal Development
- Rehabilitation Center and Evaluation Unit Annual Training
- Spanish Training Courses
- Strategic Planning
- Teaching Financial Literacy
- Workplace Violence Prevention

A library of rehabilitation resources is maintained in the state office. The Staff Development 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

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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.

DSB requires professional skills in customer service and business relationship development to enhance employment opportunities. Training materials are extensively researched and drawn from a rich spectrum of resources, including vocational rehabilitation, sales, customer service, business, marketing, workforce development, job development, SSA, RSA, EEOC, ODEP, ADA National Network, and Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Centers. Attention is given to knowledge translation: a process which includes knowledge dissemination of evidence-based and best practices derived from the results of rigorous research. The Program Specialist for Employment Services provides comprehensive training on these subjects to all newly hired VRCs and VR staff responsible for job development and placement. Follow-up training and one-on-one coaching is available to staff not meeting performance objectives.

DSB 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).

DSB partnered with Mississippi State University Research and Training Center Vision Specialist Certificate Program to train staff in the specific area of vision. DSB had one person graduate from this program in August 2012 and nine graduated in 2011. DSB began a Transition Certificate program with Winston-Salem State University and 2 staff began this program, but it has presently been suspended by the University. We are in touch with WSSU and will again offer this opportunity to staff as it presents itself. DSB is also researching additional resources for transition training.

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Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

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

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

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 DSB's state office to support DSB'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. DSB has placed the policy and procedures manual on DSB's website. The website currently contains information about all of DSB's programs, frequently used forms, links to resources, the local office locations, and the staff directory.

DSB 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 specialist who manages 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. DSB

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maintains a list of approved interpreters 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. DSB 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 Telanguage 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, DSB purchased Rosetta Stone-Spanish and made the program available to all staff in the agency. DSB has had 26 staff engage in the program since it's inception. However, secondary to technical difficulties with the program, we are presently seeking an alternative that will be more accessible to all users.

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

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

DSB 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. DSB has 13 memorandums of agreements with school systems to provide transition programs for their students who are blind

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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, Edgecombe 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.

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 members 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 the IEP team and location of specialized resources for students as they transition from school to work.

DSB provides additional specialized services for students, such as the summer youth programs at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. One program called "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. Another program called "SAVVY" College Prep provides "college survival skills," such as independent study habits and maximum use of any assistive technology.

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In addition, DSB often provides Youth Mini Centers in the communities throughout the state in coordination with the vocational rehabilitation transition program staff and the independent living rehabilitation staff for those students who cannot attend one of the Center programs. These programs focus on direct requests of the youth in that area and may include local recreational offerings, activities of daily living instruction, O&M, assistive technology evaluation and training, banking, college tours and much more.

A rehabilitation program specialist is assigned to coordinate transition services to insure all students have access to DSB'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 DSB staff, the school staff, and DSB's financial officers to insure these agreements are complete and accurate.

DSB continues to work towards expansion of the availability of additional transition programs that can better prepare students in transition from school to work and develops specialized training in transition services. The Department of Public Instruction's consultant for vision impairment and DSB's specialist for transition services work 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 DSB's state rehabilitation council.

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Attachment 4.11(a) - Statewide Assessment

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) is a division of the Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS). DSB's mission is to enable people who are blind, visually impaired or deaf blind to reach their goals of independence and employment. Eligible individuals are served in all 100 counties of North Carolina. DSB is the designated state unit recognized by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to deliver vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to individuals who have significant visual disabilities. Consistent with the mandates of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, DSB conducts a comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) every three years. The State Rehabilitation Council collaborated with DSB in the completion of the DSB 2013 CSNA. The Division contracted the services of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Department of Allied Health Sciences, and the Division of Rehabilitation Counseling & Psychology to conduct the assessment that was completed on October 31, 2013. The following research questions were addressed.

- Who are the unserved and underserved groups of individuals that are blind or visually impaired in North Carolina who do not receive the services they need from DSB?
- What are the VR service needs of minorities with visual disabilities?
- What are the VR needs of individuals with visual disabilities, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of individuals with the most significant visual disabilities, including their need for supported employment services?
- What are the vocational rehabilitation service needs of individuals with visual disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system?
- What is the need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state?

Methodology

Strategies identified in the VR Needs Assessment Guide (Shell, 2010), were used, including a review and analysis of archival data and literature consisting of the following sources.

- 2012 DSB Annual Report
- NC DSB's 2011 federal fiscal year State Plan
- Customer Satisfaction Survey Results
- CSNA reports from NC DSB and NC DVRS

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- CSNA reports from Kentucky and Virginia
- NC DSB agency data (RSA-911) or Case Service Report for FYs 2009-2012
- American Community Survey, Center for Disease Control, Current Population Survey
- State Center for Health Statistics, NC Division of Public Health, NC Department of Health and Human Services
- Prevent Blindness America
- U. S. Bureau of the Census Data for the State of North Carolina

Various stakeholders participated in surveys, key informant interviews and focus groups. The participants included current and former DSB consumers, DSB staff, eye care providers, community rehabilitation program representatives, workforce development system partners, the State Rehabilitation Council, employers and advocacy group representatives. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data was conducted.

NC Demographic Profile

North Carolina had 9,752,073 residents in 2012 of which 64.7% were non-Hispanic White, 22% Black/African American, 8.7% Hispanic or Latino, 2.5% Asian, 1.5% American Indian and Alaska Native and 2.0% multiracial with 30% of the population living in rural areas. The median household income was \$46,291 in North Carolina. The average annual income from Social Security was \$16,695 and 16.1% of the population was below the poverty line (<\$15,000).

No specific group(s) of individuals were identified as unserved in the assessment. However, statistically more females than males have vision problems such as cataracts, glaucoma, low vision, age-related macular degeneration, or blindness yet still DSB serves equal number of males and females annually. This may suggest that women are underserved by DSB. Minorities, individuals who have limited incomes and individuals living in rural areas are also underserved by DSB. Consumers of Hispanics/Latino, Black/African-American, and American Indians/Alaska Native racial/ethnic background are underserved as well. One out of three DSB consumers is African American, meaning this group does access and receive services from DSB but was found to be less successful in securing employment than the non-Hispanic White group.

Older adults, transition-age-youth/adolescents, individuals who are deaf-blind or have other multiple disabilities were also noted to be underserved.

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Employment and Community Participation

The employment rate of individuals with disabilities in North Carolina is 36.7% (American Community Survey, 2011). Thirty-nine percent of DSB consumers who participated in the CSNA reported being unemployed and unemployment is higher in some minority groups (e.g., African Americans). Of the unemployed group who participated in the study (n=119), 47% said they would like to find a job, 37% said that they had been actively searching for a job, 21% sought out vocational services in the past year (primarily through DSB or DVRS) and 43% (n=132) of all consumers who participated said they would need more assistance to participate in the community.

Barriers to employment identified by DSB consumers included the following:

- lack of jobs
- lack of transportation
- lack of state funds or budget restrictions
- lack of information regarding disability resources
- health concerns
- the lack of qualified service providers

Services Needs/Gaps identified by Consumers

- post-employment services
- supported employment
- vocational services
- assistive technology
- information and supports in accessing public transportation
- medical services
- services to improve independent living

Recommendations

Outreach to Unserved and Underserved Groups:

- Increase awareness of DSB services in the underserved communities; facilitate innovative outreach activities and events that target women, transition age youth, minorities, older adults, individuals living in rural areas and individuals with low income

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- Educate the public about the presence and role of DSB in the community. Post flyers, brochures about DSB in doctor's offices, schools, hospitals, and community agencies.

Strategic Activities to Address Employment Needs:

- Improve the retention and rehabilitation rates for individuals who are underserved (women, transition age youth, minorities, older adults, individuals living in rural areas, and individuals with low income)
- Implement evidence-based practices in vocational rehabilitation and assistive technology
- Counselors need to help consumers better understand labor market demands and select suitable job goals

Specific Service Areas:

- Improve post-employment services and supported employment and ensure better access for consumers who could benefit from them
- Educate consumers about advancements in assistive technology, available free applications that could be of use, as well as assistive technology services and resources available through DSB
- Ensure that counselors and field staff stay current regarding new technologies and continually upgrade staff members' skills
- Advocate for improved/expanded access to public transportation and develop informational resources pertaining to public transportation for consumers.
- Identify and provide consumers community resource information such as computer classes at the local community colleges, medical consultation services, housing supports.
- Improve collaboration between NC DSB, NC DVRS and community partners.

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

During FFY 2015, DSB estimates that 3,990 individuals will receive vocational rehabilitation services using Title I funds. Projected costs of services are estimated to be \$4,800,000 without implementation of order of selection.

During FFY 2013, DSB served 3,981 individuals with Title I case service funds with expenditures of \$4,771,104.

(In DSB's FFY2014 State Plan, DSB estimated that 3,535 individuals will receive vocational rehabilitation services using Title I funds, with expenditures of \$4,261,442 during FFY 2014.)

During FFY 2015, DSB estimates that 36 individuals identified as most significantly disabled will receive supported employment services with Title VI, Part B, funds at a projected cost of \$250,000.

During FFY 2013, DSB served 30 individuals with the most significant disabilities (MSD) with supported employment services using Title VI, Part B funds of \$227,754.

(In DSB's FFY2014 State Plan, DSB estimated that 35 individuals identified as MSD will receive supported employment services with Title VI, Part B, funds at a projected cost of \$130,000 during FFY 2014.)

Individuals receiving supported employment services through Title VI, Part B, funds are eligible for use of Title I funds for other services such as medical, training, guidance, and counseling, or other required services. Therefore the individuals who receive supported employment services through Title VI funds are included in the estimated number of individuals who may receive Title I funds.

DSB provides vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible individuals. While DSB has established an Order of Selection Plan for eligibility determination under the Rehabilitation Act as amended, it has not been implemented.

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

**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 through use of expanded internships, work experiences, community based work adjustment, and expanded relationships with employer portals. Goal will be to increase successful employment outcomes with benefits by 2% (baseline 2013 - 72) and to increase average wage at closure by 1% (baseline 2013 - \$11.97 per hour).

Goal 2: Increase staff knowledge about careers, employment opportunities, and business relationship development. Goal will be measured by staff reports to supervisors, who in turn will share with program specialist for job development.

Goal 3: Increase the use of supported employment services to facilitate successful employment outcomes for persons with the most significant disabilities. Goal will be measured by availability of vendors in areas where there are none at this time, increased authorizations for supported employment services, and increased number of individuals closed in successful employment after receiving supported employment services.

Goal 4: Provide a holistic approach to service provision that will better enable individuals to obtain employment and maintain it after DSB VR case closure. Goal will be measured by feedback from individuals closed with successful employment on the satisfaction survey, increase in success rate, and a decrease in the number of cases referred back to the agency within 36 months of successful employment outcome.

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

Goal 1: Provide assistive technology and training in its use for all eligible individuals who require specific equipment and software to obtain, maintain, and regain employment. Measurement criteria will be to increase the numbers of individuals who receive assistive technology services (equipment and/or training) by 1%

(baseline 2013 – 429 individuals).

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Goal 2: Assistive technology staff in all seven District Offices will receive training on latest software and hardware to enhance placement opportunities. Each field staff member will attend at least two training sessions (either on-line or in classroom) during the year on new technology.

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

Goal 1: DSB 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 FFY2013 – 310).

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

Goal 3: Rehabilitation Counselors will increase their awareness of opportunities for internships and work experiences for 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.

Goal 1: DSB's services will be provided to individuals, families, minority populations and those experiencing health disparities through targeted outreach activities. Data for the objectives will be captured and managed in DSB's new case management system called BEAM.

Goal 2: DSB will develop marketing opportunities to targeted audiences regarding specific agency programs.

Goal 3: DSB will identify ways by which DSB can assist veterans with disabilities to become able to obtain, maintain or regain employment. DSB will meet with officials working with veterans who are visually impaired, blind or deaf blind to educate them regarding services that are available to veterans with disabilities through DSB.

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

PRIORITY 5: OVER THE NEXT TWO FISCAL YEARS, IMPLEMENTATION OF SYSTEMATIC PROGRAM EVALUATIONS AND CONSISTENT QUALITY

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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 using the new case management system, BEAM, to assess program performance. Measureable criteria are the program will be in place and staff will have received training by the end of FFY2015.

Goal 2: To provide holistic, consistent, and accurate methods of quality assurance and program evaluation. Measureable criteria will be that as the program goes "live", the rehabilitation program team and supervisors will evaluate the data as it becomes available, and will identify specific methods of quality assurance that can be done through use of BEAM.

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

DSB subscribes to the following FY 2015 supported employment goals:

In all 100 counties, DSB 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 training to new rehabilitation counselors that will assist in their ability to identify and to refer individuals with the most significant disabilities for supported employment services.
2. DSB's program specialist for supported employment will provide training to community rehabilitation program staff, as requested, on information about working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired to assist in job development and placement.
3. Community rehabilitation programs will identify individuals with the most significant disabilities who want to work, and refer them to DSB for vocational rehabilitation services, which may include supported employment services.
4. During Fiscal Year 2015, DSB plans to close ten (10) individuals indicating successful employment outcomes after receiving supported employment services.

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Attachment 4.11(d) State Strategies

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 through use of expanded internships, work experiences, community based work adjustment, and expanded relationships with employer portals. Goal will be to increase successful employment outcomes with benefits by 2% (baseline 2013 - 72) and to increase average wage at closure by 1% (baseline 2013 - \$11.97 per hour).

Strategy (a): DSB's staff will utilize the internship program to obtain placements for eligible individuals who have recently completed post-secondary training or occupational education. The internship training program gives eligible individuals who are recent graduates a competitive edge with the 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 at the completion of the internship. The use of Internship will remain a strategy through September, 2015, with the goal of seven (7) internship placements that result in three (3) successful employment outcomes during FFY2015. Tracking will be done through monthly feedback to the Program Specialist for Job Placement from office supervisors.

Strategy (b): DSB staff will build upon the use of "Work Experiences without Pay" to obtain opportunities where employment is more likely to be offered at the conclusion of the work experience agreement. The goal will be to enter into 80 Work Experience without Pay agreements that result in 12 placements during FFY2015. DSB will continue to provide worker compensation coverage for consumers participating in work experiences, since the employer cannot cover them unless they are paid. Tracking will be done through monthly feedback to the Program Specialist for Job Placement from office supervisors and information made available through the agency's new case management system BEAM.

Strategy (c): DSB 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

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services afforded by supported employment services. The goal for FFY2015 will be five successful employment closures with use of this program. Tracking will be done through monthly feedback to the Program Specialist for Job Placement from office supervisors and information made available through the agency's new case management system BEAM.

Strategy (d): DSB will participate in the talent acquisition portal designed exclusively for VR individuals, which will permit increased access to local, statewide, and national job openings and direct exposure to business customers seeking to employ individuals from the talent pool of people with disabilities. A pilot project has been completed in one office that was determined to be successful, and will now be implemented in all offices during FFY2015. Tracking will be done through the agency's Program Specialist for Job Development and Placement.

Goal 2: DSB will increase staff knowledge about careers, employment opportunities, and business relationship development. Goal will be measured by staff reports to supervisors, who in turn will share with program specialist for job development.

Strategy (a): DSB will provide ongoing training experiences for all VR counselors, business representatives, and community employment specialists to include detailed knowledge of DSB work experiences, DSB Business Services, and evidence based practices related to achieving optimal employment outcomes. Each rehabilitation counselor, business representative, community employment specialist, and supervisor will attend at least one agency-sponsored event regarding best practices for placement services per year. Each new counselor, business representative, and community employment specialist will receive additional training regarding these subjects within the first six months of employment. Tracking will be done through the agency's staff development program specialist.

Strategy (b): DSB will provide staff with information on local and state labor markets, especially careers in high demand and the skills and training required to enter those careers. Each rehabilitation counselor, business representative, community employment specialist, and supervisor will attend at least two events about local commerce or job fairs in their service area, and report these to their supervisor as to how the event may influence their employment activities. Tracking will be done through reports made to the office supervisor, to be submitted monthly to the chief of rehabilitation field services.

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Strategy (c): DSB will increase the awareness of staff as to how assistive technology can increase placements in job settings, especially high demand careers. Each rehabilitation counselor, business representative, community employment specialist, and supervisor will visit at least one modified job setting to see how individuals are using the latest assistive technology on the job, and will accompany the local assistive technology consultant or rehabilitation engineer to one job site modification evaluation. Tracking will be done through reports made to the office supervisor, to be submitted monthly to the chief of rehabilitation field services.

Goal 3: DSB will increase the use of supported employment services to facilitate successful employment outcomes for persons with the most significant disabilities. Goal will be measured by availability of vendors in areas where there are none at this time, increased authorizations for supported employment services, and increased number of individuals closed in successful employment after receiving supported employment services.

Strategy (a): DSB will provide training to all DSB VR counselors regarding the definition of most significant disabling conditions that present impediments to employment and regarding supported employment services. Each office will be provided success stories of individuals in supported employment and will have a representative that meets with the program specialist for Job Development and Placement to promote SE services in their local offices. These will be coordinated by the program specialist for supported employment services, program specialist for Job Development and Placement and the area or district supervisor in each office. The occurrence and outcome of these meetings will be reported to the chief of rehabilitation field services on a quarterly basis.

Strategy (b) Each district office will identify the availability of supported employment vendors for their coverage area and report this information to the program specialist for supported employment by December, 2014. The program specialist will identify potential vendors for areas not covered, and will contact them regarding the provision of services. This will be measured by number of new vendors contacted with a goal of 7 new vendors contacted during FFY 2013.

Goal 4: DSB staff will be able to increase an individual's ability to maintain employment after DSB VR closure by providing holistic evaluations and service provision while active cases in areas related to secondary disabilities, independent living skills, support systems, etc. Goal will be measured by feedback from individuals closed with successful employment on the satisfaction

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survey, increase in success rate, and a decrease in the number of cases referred back to the agency within 36 months of successful employment outcome.

Strategy (a) Training in areas of the most common secondary disabling conditions and associated services will be provided to all DSB VR counselors. Based on availability of training funds, this will need to occur through FFY2017.

Supervisors will be trained on assisting staff to find vendors and resources for payment (if needed) for treatment of these conditions.

Strategy (b) Counselors will partner with other DSB staff, including DSB social workers for the blind, Rehabilitation Center for the Blind staff, and independent living rehabilitation counselors, and with local private non-profit organizations to assist consumers in acquiring skills, resources and assistance needed to obtain the necessary level of employment stability. This will include, but not limited to, instruction in independent living skills, financial assistance for medical costs through the Affordable Health Care Act, resources for a stable living environment, locating local support groups, understanding protection through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other employment-related laws, etc. Outcome of this strategy will be measured by decreasing the number of cases reopened during a fiscal year by 10% that had been closed with a successful employment outcome during the three previous years. (Baseline will be established by number of cases reopened in FFY2014 that were successful outcome closures during FFY2011, FFY2012 and FFY2013.)

Goal 5: DSB will investigate evidence-based practices for the purpose of integrating them into DSB rehabilitation processes that will apply to all cases, make policy adjustments as needed, and train counselors in their use over the next three fiscal years.

Strategy (a). DSB will establish a committee to study the incorporation of evidence-based practices in rehabilitation that will include study of other states and consultation with individuals in the academic institutions during the first year of this goal. The committee will consist of selected individuals from the agency leadership team, Rehabilitation Center for the Blind staff and field staff. The outcome will be recommendations to the chiefs of rehabilitation regarding changes in practice needed. Tracking will be the report of the study.

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Strategy (b) During the second year, the chiefs of rehabilitation will establish criteria and will work with the staff development specialist to determine training needs to achieve the recommended practice changes. Training will be provided to staff regarding the practice changes. Quality assurance methods will be established for assurance that the practices are implemented. Tracking will be that all staff with direct consumer contact have received training.

Strategy (c) During the third year, use of the recommended evidence-based practices will be monitored by supervisors and the chief of rehabilitation field services for field staff, and by the Rehabilitation Center director and chief of programs and facilities for the Rehabilitation Center. Tracking will be results of the quality assurance reviews regarding use of the criteria and feedback from office supervisors to the chief of rehabilitation field services, and by feedback from the Rehabilitation Center staff to the chief of programs and facilities.

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

Goal 1: DSB will provide assistive technology and training in its use for all eligible individuals who require specific equipment and software to obtain, maintain, and regain employment. Measurement criteria will be to increase the numbers of individuals who receive assistive technology services (equipment and/or training) by 1% (baseline 2013 – 429 individuals).

Strategy (a): DSB will maintain the policy to purchase of technology for eligible individuals without regard to financial eligibility when required for success in reaching their vocational goal. The individual must be working toward an employment goal that requires specific technology to attain, regain, or maintain employment and have the capacity to use the equipment.

Goal 2: Assistive technology staff in all seven District Offices will receive training on latest software and hardware to enhance placement opportunities. Each field staff member will attend at least two training sessions (either on-line or in classroom) during the year on new technology.

Strategy (a): DSB will provide training for the Rehabilitation Engineer, Assistive Technology Consultants, and Assistive Technology teachers and instructors about new

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and innovative products. All staff attending the training sessions will provide a written report and copies of materials obtained to their supervisors, the program specialist for AT and Deaf/Blind, and the staff development program specialist.

Strategy (b): DSB will partner with the NC Assistive Technology Project and the NC Rehabilitation Association to sponsor the 2014 “NCRA/NCATP Training Conference and Exhibitor Showcase” (formerly the NC Assistive Technology Expo) October 22-25, 2014, in Greenville, NC, and identify at least two presentations about assistive 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: DSB 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 FFY2013 – 310).

Strategy (a) Current cooperative agreements with thirteen LEA’s will be maintained. School budget shortfalls are predicted to continue into the next fiscal year so expansion of this program is not anticipated. However, staff will continue making contacts with LEA’s to offer opportunities for such programs. Area supervisors and program specialist for transition will make at least one contact with each LEA during the year. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will be responsible for tracking these contacts through the office supervisors.

Strategy (b) Transition services to students attending schools without DSB Cooperative Agreements are served by DSB VR counselors covering those counties where the schools are located. Rehabilitation counselors will contact the lead teacher for the visually impaired for the LEA’s in their counties at least twice per year. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will be responsible for tracking these contacts through the office supervisors.

Strategy (c) The program specialist for transition and supported employment will establish contact with state level associations for private schools, charter schools, and home-schools to share information about transition services available through DSB for distribution to their members statewide. Referrals resulting from contact with state level

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associations will be shared with the appropriate field VR counselor for contact by the program specialist for transition and supported employment as received.

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

Strategy (a): The program specialist for transition services will conduct transition staff meetings and provide ongoing trainings quarterly to increase staff awareness and knowledge about transition issues and policy.

Goal 3: Rehabilitation Counselors will increase their awareness of opportunities for internships and work experiences for transition age students.

Strategy (a): The program specialist for transition and supported employment will provide current information about opportunities for transition age individuals by email distribution and by staff meeting presentations.

Strategy (b): Training about transition services and their responsibilities of outreach in their coverage area will be provided to all new rehabilitation counselors. Training will be provided by the program specialist for transition and in Best Practices for New DSB VR Counselors. It is important that this training be provided through the state rehabilitation program staff as local supervisors to increase consistency to reaching all school-age individuals with visual impairments regarding the availability of transition services from DSB.

Strategy (c): Program Specialist for Transition Services and the Transition Counselors 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: DSB's services will be provided to individuals, families, minority populations and those experiencing health disparities through targeted outreach

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activities. Data for the objectives will be captured and managed the program specialist for AT/Deaf Blind.

Strategy (a): Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are Hispanics/Latinos by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was 159.)

Strategy (b): Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are African American by 1% from October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was a total of 1614 individuals who are African-American.)

Strategy (c): Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are Native American by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (Baseline unable to be established due to delays in BEAM, and tracking the increase will begin in FFY 2015.)

Strategy (d): Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are veterans by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (Baseline data needs to be collected for this population for the first time using BEAM. The existing data collection system provides that nine individuals who are veterans were served in FFY2013; however the reliability of this data may be low.)

Strategy (e): Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who have diabetes by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was 1857, with 109 of these being consumers with cases initiated in FFY2013.)

Goal 2: DSB will develop marketing opportunities to targeted populations regarding specific agency programs.

Strategy (a): DSB will develop individualized program/service brochures (Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Independent Living Rehabilitation, Independent Living Services, Deaf-Blind, Rehab Center, Business Enterprise, Assistive Technology and Assistive Technology Instructors, Evaluation Unit and for individuals with Diabetes, medical providers and Veterans) to be placed on the agency's website and be used at outreach events. The program specialist for AT/Deaf Blind services will coordinate the development of these brochures that will be done by the individual programs. Due to

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funding issues, it is anticipated this strategy will be completed accomplished in FFY2016.

Strategy (b): DSB staff will develop presentations to other state agencies and to organizations who work with individuals within the targeted populations regarding opportunities for persons with blindness and visual impairments and about services available through DSB. Tracking will occur by reports to the chief of rehabilitation field services regarding presentations made and the targeted population.

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

Strategy: DSB will meet with officials working with veterans who are visually impaired, blind or deaf blind to educate them regarding services that are available to veterans with disabilities through DSB.

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

Strategy (a): DSB will increase the number of DSB employees who are of an ethnic or racial minority by 1.5 percent for FFY 2015 (baseline – FFY2013 is 85).

Strategy (b): DSB will encourage staff to participate in local training programs, either on-line or in community college system, in other languages. The program specialist for staff development will track and report the number of individuals who request and acquire this type of training.

PRIORITY 5: OVER THE NEXT TWO FISCAL YEARS, IMPLEMENTATION 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: DSB will increase their ability to provide consistent and accurate data using the new case management system, BEAM, for assessment of program performance. Tracking will be that the program is in place, staff has received

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training, and strengths and deficiencies of the reporting capabilities are determined by the end of FFY2015.

Strategy (a): The agency will provide refresher training, support, and problem-solving after the initiation of 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.

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

Goal 2: DSB provides holistic, consistent, and accurate methods of quality assurance and program evaluation. Measureable criteria will be that as BEAM goes "live", the rehabilitation program team and supervisors evaluates the data, and identifies specific methods of quality assurance that can be done through use of BEAM.

Strategy (a): The chief of rehabilitation field services, with consultation of supervisors, will 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 completed and in place with staff during FFY2016.

Strategy (b): DSB quality assurance team (chief of rehabilitation field services, program specialists, and office supervisors) will use Quality Assurance methods to achieve holistic, consistent, and accurate measures of case reviews.

Strategy (c): DSB will provide feedback and training to counseling staff using the results of the quality assurance reviews to improve best practices in providing services to individuals. Tracking will be done by a meeting with counselor staff in each office at least annually to review the quality assurance review by the chief of rehabilitation field services or by the office supervisor with report to the chief.

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Attachment 4.11(e) (2) Evaluation of 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 number of experienced individuals in the current job market due to company closings and layoffs. The Division 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.

During FFY2013, DSB experienced multiple changes in personnel and state government state hiring freezes by those responsible for tracking these numbers. As a result, accurate numbers are not available. However, all offices are aware of the Internship and similar opportunities made available for clients. In one situation, an individual received an internship from an employer, but the employer was then unable to offer the individual a job. However, due to the experience gained in the internship, the individual was hired by another company doing the same work due to their experience acquired during the internship. Therefore, this program is considered to be very successful and will be closely monitored in the future, not only by staff but through the new case management system, BEAM to allow for a more reliable reporting mechanism.

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

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support services afforded by supported employment services. The goal for FFY2013 will be five successful employment closures with use of this program.

During FFY2013, DSB experienced multiple changes in personnel and state government state hiring freezes by those responsible for tracking these numbers. As a result, accurate numbers are not available. However, all offices are aware of this opportunity. It has been noted that several individuals have received the first milestone; Community Based Assessment, and have gone on to employment without needing the full program of services.

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.

DSB VR counselors were provided ongoing information and training about career opportunities and specific position requirements consistent with employer needs in NC. Many of these opportunities were the result of business relationships developed through CSAVR's National Employment Team. Some of these business relationships were developed through referrals from OFCCP to Vocational Rehabilitation, and it is anticipated that both sources of business referrals and subsequent knowledge of employer needs will grow in importance for educating VR counselors on NC career opportunities. Meeting the assistive technology needs of consumers was addressed through training VR counselors to both utilize referrals to the Division's Assistive Technology Consultants and to use the Job Accommodation Network to identify AT accommodations as a means to educate themselves and employers. During job development and placement trainings, assistive technology solutions used by consumers to achieve successful employment were shared between VR counselors to advance knowledge of AT solutions. The emphasis on assistive technology as a vital component for successful employment is a practice supported by the Division's management, and information on new AT products and solutions is routinely shared across the agency with all VR counselors.

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.

Each office did complete an office plan for targeting employers that offered higher wages and advancement opportunities. This objective will be continued into next

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year with more supervision by the Chief of Rehabilitation Field Services and technical assistance from the program specialist for job development and placement.

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.

Targeted one-on-one training has been offered to each new counselor and business representative and to those who have lower numbers of business contacts and successful placements. Not all took advantage of this training. During FFY2013, changes in management staff and lengthy vacancies in field positions, as well as time spent to initiate BEAM, created barriers to the needed emphasis. However, this is an established practice at this point and will be continued and maintained as a high priority in the coming 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): 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.

The agency's web page has a targeted area for services available for transition age students. However, due to changes in the state's regulations and policies regarding web-page content and maintenance, other ways of intra-agency information sharing and presentations outside the agency are being developed. Internship opportunities through employers or national and local organizations, including unique requirements and deadlines, were provided to all VR counselors who shared that information with their transitioning students.

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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Training for new counselors, called Best Practices for New DSB VR Counselors, includes a major section on provision of services to students in secondary schools. During FFY2013, it was revamped by the Chief of Rehabilitation Field Services to ensure it included definitions and acronyms used within schools, to identify key individuals to whom contact is to be made, and to denote the importance of reaching individuals at an early age.

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

Goal 1: Provide accessible 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.

DSB now provides assistive technology to individuals who require it for employment without regard to income. During FFY2013, 429 individuals were provided assistive technology services, and case service funds of \$188,813 were spent on technology devices to include hardware and software.

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.

During FFY2013, DSB field AT staff and Rehabilitation Center for the Blind AT staff attended the NC Assistive Technology Project/NC Rehabilitation Association Conference for 2012 in December, 2012, and for 2013 in August, 2013. This conference provided numerous presentations about use of AT with persons with

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blindness and visual impairments as well as about use with other disabling conditions. The largest vendor hall available in North Carolina is provided at these conferences, allowing staff to meet and talk with vendors from multiple companies and areas of specialty.

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. DSB partnered with other sponsors of this event by submitting a contribution in excess of \$2,500 to each conference and by providing presenters for three concurrent sessions. Participation in this program reach numerous individuals outside DSB that reach persons from a variety of targeted populations, as it is attended by other vocational rehabilitation agencies, private non-profit organizations and private individuals.

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 more than 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.

Despite significant budget cuts for school systems, the cooperative agreements with the 15 local education agencies (LEA) were maintained. The number of students served in these programs during FFY2013 is 288 students, which is a 6.7% increase from FFY2011 (270 served).

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.

The number served by community counselors in LEA's not covered by cooperative agreements significantly decreased during FFY2013. Due to state personnel initiated hiring freeze effects, several counselor positions that normally provided services

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remained vacant. The work load prevented outreach to students in these LEA's, as well as to private schools and home schooled individuals within the 14 to 21 age range. This will remain as these freezes have slowly been lifted during FFY2014.

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.

Two individuals enrolled into this program. However, due to funding streams, program changes occurred and Winston-Salem State temporarily suspended this program. When it is reinitiated, the Program Specialist for Staff Development will distribute information regarding this opportunity with intent to have individuals participate.

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.

All transition staff participated in this training. Reports from staff indicate that some of the information was found to be useful. However, other information included in this training was found to not be appropriate for students being served who are blind or visually impaired but otherwise independent.

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. Due to the state imposed hiring freeze, the program specialist position has remained vacant for over a year. Meetings were limited, although the transition staff across the state shared information throughout the year.

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

The agency's web page has a targeted area for services available for transition age students. However, due to changes in the state's regulations and policies regarding

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web-page content and maintenance, other ways of intra-agency information sharing and presentations outside the agency are being developed.

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

Training for new counselors, called Best Practices for New DSB VR Counselors, includes a major section on provision of services to students in secondary schools. During FFY2013, it was revamped by the Chief of Rehabilitation Field Services to ensure it included definitions and acronyms used within schools, to identify key individuals to whom contact is to be made, and to denote the importance of reaching individuals at an early age. It was last held in March, 2013.

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

While the Program Specialist for Transition Services position remained vacant most of the year, the Chief of Rehabilitation Field Services was available to work with staff regarding transition services. The Chief and the Transition Counselors worked with the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in development of the SAVVY summer program for students (Summer Adaptation Vital to Visually-impaired Youth). This program provided a four-week in-house training that was divided into three segments. First, for the younger students who need more independent living skills training, the Summer Adjustment Vision for Youth was held. Secondly, for students wanting to learn more about employment, the WOW (World of Work) program provided paid internships for them to explore work interests. Thirdly, for students who are rising seniors and heading for colleges, the Summer College Prep program is offered that enhances their assistive technology skills and allows them to experience a true college classroom with the assistance of the Center staff. During the summer of FFY2013, 84 youth participated in these Rehabilitation Center training programs.

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 THE DIVISION.

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 more than 2% during the period October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2013. (The baseline for FFY 2011 was 140)

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During FFY2013, DSB provided services to 159 individuals who stated they are of Hispanic ethnicity. This represents a 13% increase over the number served during FFY2011. This goal is met, but the goal will need to continue as these efforts must be continued due to change in the state's population.

Objective (b): Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served from the African American, Native Americans and other minority groups by more than 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)

During FFY2013, DSB provided services to 1633 individuals who stated they are African American, Native American or other minority group, with 1,614 being African American and 19 as from other minority groups. This represents a 7% increase over the number served during FFY 2011. Due to the limitations of existing data collection systems, these groups cannot be broken into further detail; the new data collection system that was anticipated to be in operation for this reporting is not operational at this time. This goal is met, but the goal will need to continue as these efforts must be continued due to change in the state's population.

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.

Due to state and department policies and procedures, involvement and use of social media is not allowed. Therefore this objective is removed.

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.

Due to complications in the development of this system, BEAM is not operational at this point. This strategy will be continued until BEAM is in place.

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.

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During FFY 2013, DSB collaborated with organizations who serve veterans to provide information about how veterans can access DSB VR and Independent Living services. Specific events included participating in the Charlotte Army Reserve conference (10/2012), Gaston Co. Blind Veterans Group (10/2012), Asheville VA Job Placement staff (10/2012), Asheville VA Medical Center Healthy Living staff (10/2012, 01/2013, and 02/2013), Asheville VA Project Connect/Homeless Veterans (10/2012), Durham VA Homeless Veterans Program (07/2013), Charlotte VA VIST Program (07/2013), and Stand Down Day for Veterans in Guilford Co (09/2013).

DSB developed a PowerPoint presentation entitled "DSB: Part of the Continuum of Care for Veterans" designed to specifically target veterans with diabetes who are losing vision, as well as those with glaucoma, cataract and macular degeneration. DSB has visited VA offices/facilities across the state to actively collaborate and partner with them to improve services to veterans without duplication.

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 more than 2.5 percent for FFY 2013.

During FFY2013, the agency actually experienced a decrease in the number of staff members who state they are of an ethnic or racial minority. In FFY2012, 88 staff members reported they are of an ethnic or racial minority (81 African American, 3 Native American, 2 Hispanic, and 2 other). In FFY2013, the number dropped by 3% to 85 staff members (79 African American, 2 Native American, 1 Hispanic, and 3 other). During FFY2013, the agency experienced an increased number of retirements and a hiring freeze, which decreased the number of active staff. This goal will continue to be monitored.

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.

During FFY2013, DSB had 26 registered users of the Spanish training modules.

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 used by staff using assistive technology will be resolved during the first year of its use.

Due to complications in the development of this system, BEAM is not operational at this point. This strategy will be continued until BEAM is in place.

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

Reviews of outcome data from the agency’s archaic system continues to be reviewed on monthly basis by management staff and local supervisors, examining it for trends or problems indicated by the data.

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.

Due to complications in the development of this system, BEAM is not operational at this point. This strategy will be continued until BEAM is in place.

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

Due to multiple personnel changes, mostly initiated by retirements, reviews are done and input regarding implications for change is recorded. This will continue throughout FFY2015, as a new Chief of Field Services who is responsible for quality assurance will be in place and can initiate input into measures and methodology.

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6.3 Quality, Scope and Extent of Supported Employment Services Quality

DSBs 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.

DSB'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 DSB staff, and training to private nonprofit CRP staff, employers, eligible individuals, families and advocates, has moved the program towards an improved quality of services.

Quality outcomes emphasize achievement of a successful stable employment outcome as determined by the individual, DSB'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. DSB'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.

DSB 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

The scope of supported employment services includes all of DSB'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 DSB'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

DSB purchases supported employment services from private nonprofit CRP's in the individual's locality, and offers supported employment services to eligible individuals

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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 DSB's transition programs in all 100 counties if required for successful employment outcomes.

DSB 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.

DSB'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 in 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 DSB's intervention, the individual will be referred back to the DSB 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

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the interruption of employment. DSB 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.

DSB is continually striving towards improving its supported employment program to provide the best service possible to the individual. Therefore, DSB 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 DSB'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 DSB'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.