



## **Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

### **State Plan 2006**

Colorado Department of Human Services  
Office of Adult, Disability, and Rehabilitation Services  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
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**ATTACHMENT 4.2 (c)**

Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations

**FY 2006**



## **Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has had a State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for over twenty-three years. The SRC mission statement is:

“The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a partner with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) in developing and evaluating the effectiveness of its vocational rehabilitation programs. The SRC advises DVR concerning activities under the Rehabilitation Act, assists in the development of the state plan, and helps determine the extent of consumer satisfaction with DVR’s services that affect vocational client employment outcomes.”

Colorado's SRC uses standing committees as well as ad hoc committees to conduct most of the detailed work on various issues. The standing committees include:

1. **CONSUMER SATISFACTION COMMITTEE** addresses direct access issues of the DVR consumer of vocational rehabilitation services. The committee presents reports and recommendations to the entire State Rehabilitation Council for review and confirmation. The committee is responsible for the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. The committee also cooperates with DVR in the maintenance of the Hearing Officers pool used by clients in appeals.
2. **EMPLOYMENT LINKAGE COMMITTEE** forges a partnership between businesses and vocational rehabilitation services to facilitate client transition into employment. The committee lobbies and advocates for Partners With Industry in business and industry. The committee also maintains a Speaker’s Bureau to provide information about ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and other issues and topics regarding the vocational rehabilitation process.
3. **MEMBERSHIP/RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE** insures that membership of the SRC is in compliance with the mandates of the 1998 Rehabilitation Act. The committee also assures that members and associate members participate and contribute to the SRC and its mission. The committee recommends potential SRC members for Governor appointment.

Minutes are maintained of all SRC meetings and retreats, and they provide a summary of the advice and recommendations which have been provided to DVR. Each standing and ad hoc committee of the SRC is staffed by appropriate Division of Vocational Rehabilitation personnel to assure that the SRC is apprised of DVR’s developing issues and to assure that the SRC has ample opportunity to provide input into DVR’s administrative and program activities. Effective January 1, 2002, an SRC representative began participating on DVR’s internal Policy Advisory Group to assure adequate SRC input into all of DVR’s formal policy discussions from their inception. In a similar fashion, the SRC has a member on DVR’s internal Program Evaluation Advisory Group so that the SRC has more direct input into DVR’s annual assessments of program effectiveness.

The Consumer Satisfaction Committee designs, implements and analyzes the results from the consumer satisfaction survey. During calendar year 2003, the SRC contracted with the University of Colorado at Denver to conduct a targeted telephone survey of consumer satisfaction with DVR personnel, satisfaction with services, and improvement of services conduct a survey. However, the SRC did not conduct a consumer satisfaction survey during

2004. The time it took to develop, conduct and analyze the results was extensive, and it was quite expensive. Thus, the SRC instead conducted a survey of DVR counselors to determine what, if any, recommendations could be made to DVR to improve the quality of its service delivery processes. During 2006, the SRC again intends to conduct a telephone survey with consumers.

The focus of the State Rehabilitation Council's activities has been and continues to be to work with DVR in developing strategies for how the SRC can partner with and support DVR's efforts in the community, from educating the public and community advocacy organizations about the State/Federal VR program's mission and mandates, providing real stories about how DVR has helped persons with disabilities, advocating for legislative support for DVR, and to expanding DVR's employer network.

The following recommendations have been presented to DVR by the State Rehabilitation Council as a result of their activities during 2004 and 2005. DVR's response to each recommendation is identified in italics.

**DVR needs to endorse the legitimacy of self-employment outcomes and operationalize this commitment at all levels of the organization.**

- *DVR staff and the SRC are working together to restructure DVR's self-employment program. DVR's s Self-employment Consultant position was increased from a half-time to full-time position in November of 2004, and this individual is now reporting to the VR program rather than the BEP program. Current efforts are focused on revising self-employment procedures to assure that our self-employment program guidelines and practices are practical, reasonable, consistent from office to office, and effective for consumers. An outline of the potential changes was presented to DVR management in February 2005. Based on their input as well as that from the State Rehabilitation Council, revised policies and procedures will be implemented on July 1, 2005.*
- *State Rehabilitation Council conducted a forum to get the input of DVR consumers currently pursuing self-employment concerning things that are working well and barriers they are encountering. The results of this forum will be provided to DVR and used in its efforts to restructure its self-employment program.*

**Improve morale and administrative support for staff in field offices.**

*Due to the substantial findings from RSA's 107 monitoring review for 2002, the urgency with which DVR had to respond to the findings, and DVR's budgetary reductions, the last 2 years has been difficult for all DVR staff. As a result, staff morale has become an issue that must be addressed in order for DVR to become more successful in assisting persons with disabilities with employment. To do this, DVR believes that it needs to strike a reasonable balance between the use of administrative controls and trusting the integrity of field office personnel as it strives to be more accountable for its activities and outcomes.*

- *Focus groups have been conducted with all supervisory districts to measure staff morale and get their suggestions for improvements. The outcome of this activity was the development of a Field Services Action Plan that contained several initiatives, including streamlining paperwork, revisiting procurement policies and procedures, and reformatting the policy manual to make it more user-friendly.*

- *Incorporating aspects of the VR process necessary to address all of DVR's service delivery performance deficiencies into its documentation system for the last 18 months resulted in documentation requirements that exceed those stipulated by the Rehabilitation Act and its implementing regulations in some areas. Although DVR believes that this was necessary to force a rapid change in the orientation of how DVR's counselors prioritize casework activities and to guide the decision-making processes that counselors engage in, DVR management believes that this has been accomplished. Thus, paperwork processes are being reviewed and revised; this initial review is being conducted exclusively by field services staff, including supervisors, counselors, and managers. Their recommendations were presented to DVR management in February 2005. Revised forms were piloted during the month of March and will undergo review from the State Rehabilitation Council during April 2005.*
- *Service delivery policy is also being reviewed by field services staff, and all recommended changes will be presented to DVR management no later than the first of May 2005. Once their recommendations are final, it will be presented to the State Rehabilitation Council for review and feedback before implementation. However, based on recommendations from field staff, the procedure requiring 90 days of job stability before closure has already been changed in accordance with permission provided in regulation. Policy now requires employment for at least 90 days and achievement of job stability in that employment before a successful closure is allowed.*
- *A contract has been developed with a new vendor to complete DVR's automated case management system (RISE). This is the effort that will produce the greatest relief to counselors in managing and completing necessary casework documentation accurately and efficiently. The software will be rolled out in phases, with resource management in the field within 6-9 months, case management 9-12 months later, and accounting/budgeting/federal reporting 6 months after the rollout of case management. DVR also hopes to have the vendor database module rolled out to field staff by the fall of 2005, if possible.*
- *The provider relations unit is currently working with CDHS contracting to determine the degree to which DVR's provider agreement processes can be streamlined. A proposal has been submitted that would eliminate the need for a Provider Agreement for any vendor whose anticipated fiscal year expenditures are less than \$25,000. However, this proposal will need to be approved by the State Controller's Office before further action can be taken. In addition, it will require DVR to cease service provision by any vendor without a contract once expenditures reach \$25,000 during the year until a Provider Agreement can be developed. This means that DVR will have to develop a complex monitoring process to assure that this will work without negatively affecting the continuity of services for consumers. Although this will be easy to incorporate into RISE, DVR's current accounting system makes it very difficult to do before then. A final decision about whether or not this is feasible before RISE will be made by July 1, 2005.*
- *Filing critical vacancies has been difficult over the last 3 years. However, DVR currently has an open continuous announcement for filling VR counselor vacancies, and testing of applicants occurs on a monthly basis. DVR has also received a waiver to recruit out-of-state. The Director has been actively engaged in recruiting activities during all of her trips within the State as well as nationally. Finally, DVR has been hiring interns for vacancies in areas that have been most difficult to fill. As a result, DVR has filled most of its counseling vacancies and is in the process of filling vacant supervisory positions. With ability to hire*

*more direct service delivery staff, DVR is able to involve field office staff more directly in administrative decision-making.*

- *Training for direct service delivery staff will be substantially increased to make sure that counselors have the necessary skills, knowledge, and tools to perform their jobs efficiently and effectively. To accomplish this, the training unit has been moved under the supervision of the Administrator of Field Services. In addition, another full-time FTE has been transferred to this unit to assist with training as of March 2005.*

*In addition to normal ongoing training activities, the following topics are those that DVR management has established as training priorities for the next 18 months: effective service provision to persons with mental illnesses, informed choice, understanding and maintaining good casework practices, problem-solving strategies for reducing the number of unsuccessful closures, more effective and efficient job development and placement, upward mobility training, and leadership and management development.*

- *DVR would like to expand its network of available VR service providers, and DVR understands that its relatively low fees for certain services have limited the availability of vendors willing to work with us—particularly in rural areas of the State. However, given the uncertainty of DVR's budget for the remainder of 2005 and 2006, revisions to fees must be very close to budget neutral. DVR is currently conducting an analysis to determine which fees are most critical to increase and where there is room for a fee decrease to offset the increases. A revised fee structure will be implemented by July 1, 2005, pending the outcome of an analysis of DVR's budget situation for 2006.*
- *Streamlining paperwork and associated policy requirements will enable counselors to spend more time on the work that they like and are skilled to do—working directly with consumers. However, in order to better balance DVR's focus on needed program improvements with an appreciation of the talents and abilities of staff, DVR has instituted a monthly staff of distinction award that is presented by a member of the management team to acknowledge and celebrate service delivery staff achievements.*
- *DVR conducted facilitated groups sessions with field services staff concerning the pros and cons of instituting more flexible work place and work schedule policies, such as telecommuting, granting of compensation time to salaried personnel, etc., within confines of state and departmental policies. Based on the results of these sessions, DVR management is exploring options that would work for the agency. It is currently collecting more information from other agencies and organizations for use in crafting well reasoned and informed policies. DVR hopes to implement its revised policies during 2006.*

**Provide State Rehabilitation Council with more timely updates on DVR's budget situation.** *The State Rehabilitation Council is being provided written budget at each full council meeting.*

**ATTACHMENT 4.9 (c)**

Cooperation and Coordination with Other Agencies and Entities

**FY 2006**





**ATTACHMENT 4.9 (c)(1)**

Cooperation with Agencies That Are Not in the Statewide Workforce Investment System and  
With Other Entities

**FY 2006**



## **Cooperation with Agencies That Are Not in the Statewide Workforce Investment System and with Other Entities**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) cooperates with an extensive number of public and private agencies and programs, including local school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), community mental health centers and other mental health programs, community colleges, universities, county human services agencies, community centered boards serving persons with developmental disabilities, the corrections system, and other agencies. The Division's employees are integral members of many interagency teams and regularly collaborate with agencies and programs to facilitate the provision of services to its primary customers.

In all of the coordination activities throughout the State, the goal is to reduce the duplication of services and to maximize the DVR customer's opportunity to obtain an employment outcome of their choice. There are no special programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or State use contracting programs operating outside of the statewide workforce investment system in any part of Colorado.

### Mental Health Programs

DVR offices work cooperatively with a number of mental health programs. The Mental Health Supported Employment Project operates under a formalized agreement between DVR and The Division of Mental Health and involves local level supported employment agreements with Adams Community Mental Health Center, Boulder County Mental Health, Larimer County Mental Health Center, Weld County Mental Health, and Midwestern Mental Health Center which covers six counties on the western slope. Services consist of job coaching, placement, and on-going support. The purpose of this project is to enhance employment opportunities for individuals with chronic mental illness (CMI). This program has resulted in increased integrated employment opportunities for these individuals.

Throughout the Region the DVR offices work with the community mental health centers serving the area. Counselors and supervisors provide orientation and training sessions for mental health center staff and their clients. Where the community mental health centers have established vocational and supported employment programs, DVR often partners with these centers to meet the needs of our mutual clients. The cooperative planning and service delivery result in improved service delivery, increased client satisfaction, and greater numbers of successful employment outcomes.

At least once annually, DVR staff meets with staff from various departments at the Colorado Mental Health Institute at Pueblo (CMHIP) to provide orientation and training regarding rehabilitation eligibility and service delivery. These sessions include discussions of referral processes as well as ways to better coordinate transition of individuals from the institutionalized setting into successful community based employment outcomes.

### County Human Services Agencies

DVR also cooperates with County Departments of Human/Social Services to enable disabled TANF recipients to reduce their dependency on public assistance through employment through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. This innovative program was part of a DVR initiated initiative approved by the Colorado Legislature. The coordinated effort enables DVR counselors to become specialists in services to persons with disabilities receiving

TANF benefits. The knowledge of the TANF program and benefits reduces duplication of services and provides faster and more successful delivery of needed rehabilitation services thus enabling the individual to successfully move into appropriate employment outcomes. Through cooperative agreements with matching funds, DVR, along with El Paso County Departments of Social Services and Pueblo Department of Human Services, has dedicated counseling positions to be co-located at the county facilities to make the full range of vocational rehabilitation services available to eligible individuals. Goals have been established for referrals and placements. Counselors and supervisors have increased efforts and activities with county social service agencies in working with recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), who have disability related employment issues. In Adams County, a counselor is specifically assigned to serve residents of the county who receive TANF services. Agency staff have also been involved with Colorado Dept. of Human Services' Self-Sufficiency Services, working together to improve TANF recipients access to needed services and quality employment.

### School Districts, BOCES, Colleges and Universities

The School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) is established through a series of 40 contracts with local school districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to provide vocational rehabilitation services to eligible individuals between the ages of 16-25 with mild to moderate needs in employment. Services are provided through a case management model, and are community based. Services typically consist of: referral development, acquiring diagnostic information, vocational goal development, counseling and guidance, placement, work adjustment training, job seeking skills training, job coaching and one-year of post-status 26 closure follow-up support. Each supervisory district has multiple SWAP contracts. 132 of Colorado's 176 school districts are currently involved in operating a SWAP partnership within the local communities that are established within those districts. On average, over 2,000 youth are served each year through SWAP. It is anticipated that SWAP will expand into five additional sites within the next year, which will involve over 140 of Colorado's school districts. The SWAP effort has increased awareness of the existence of DVR among educators and has resulted in increased numbers of students being referred to DVR for services. The increased service delivery has also increased the number of individuals obtaining successful employment outcomes. Interest in expanding the number of educational units participating in the SWAP continues to grow.

As part of DVR's service delivery to clients, many individuals attend community colleges and universities. DVR Offices work closely with the many offices dedicated to support of students with disabilities at each institution. In addition, at the state level DVR has a representative who is a member of the Consortium of Support Programs for Students with Disabilities. This membership allows for ongoing communication between the community colleges, universities and DVR in areas related to accommodation issues and other related topics. This assists DVR customers in the completion of their areas of study and enables them to move more successfully into their chosen employment outcome. This also supports the ongoing renewal of the memorandums of understanding between DVR and the six college boards within this state which detail the collaborative provision of services to students with disabilities who are in an institution of higher education and who are also recipients of services through DVR.

DVR staff has also worked with Access Colorado, an employer program associated with the Community College and Occupational Education System. This program has set up specialized employment training, which meets specific employer needs, for clients in this region. This resulted in a number of trainees obtaining career-path employment.

### Community Centered Boards

Community Centered Boards (CCB) serving persons with developmental disabilities are important partners in DVR's effort to assure the availability of quality vocational rehabilitation services throughout the state. In nearly each area of the state, DVR counselors and supervisors meet frequently with Community Centered Board staff to coordinate services delivery. This is especially evident in DVR's delivery of supported employment services. For DVR customers who meet Community Centered Board eligibility for service delivery, the CCB is almost always the provider of extended ongoing support services to assure the success of the supported employment outcome. DVR staff, working together with CCB staff, assist and facilitate customer's expression of choice in service delivery options, employment outcomes, and providers of services through networks of "approved service agencies". Community Centered Boards: DVR staff attends board and committee meetings to facilitate an effective working relationship between our agencies.

### The Corrections System

DVR acknowledges that many individuals who have been convicted of criminal acts are also individuals with disabilities. DVR staff coordinates services with probation offices, parole offices, as well as working directly with many of the youth and adult correctional institutions in the state. For individuals who meet DVR eligibility DVR works to coordinate services that compliment the release plans that are mutually developed by the individual with the disability and the correctional program they are attached to.

One of the region's Supervisors is a member of the Denver Juvenile Justice Network, along with other groups such as the Mayor's Office of Employment and Training (MOET), Department of Youth Corrections, and Summer Youth Employment. Counselors also work with referrals from the Department of Corrections/Adult Parole and Probation Officers. In addition, construction of a state prison in Sterling will cause both referrals and employment opportunities to increase, not only in the Sterling area, but also in surrounding communities.

### Migratory and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) with Disabilities Project

Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation continues to take major steps toward improving outreach and service delivery to migrant and seasonal farm workers. This has been made possible through the Migratory and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) with Disabilities Project, which is a five-year federal grant designed specifically for the purpose of reaching and meeting the needs of this population. This grant, which is the second consecutive grant that Colorado has had in operation, is in the last year of a five-year period and services through this project have been expanded and firmly established statewide.

Up to this point much has been accomplished through the implementation of new and different approaches designed to meet the needs of this hard to reach population. This begins by having bilingual/bicultural vocational rehabilitation counselors available in all areas that understand the culture and who are able communicate in the Spanish language. Counselors are aware that many times their customers are not able to come to the office therefore it is important to conduct their visits in the fields or other designated locations and this often requires evening and weekend visits. Vocational rehabilitation counselors working with this project also understand it is important to collaborate and network with other agencies and who serve or advocate for the MSFW population. This is done primarily through membership and active involvement in local

Coalitions as well as the Colorado Migrant and Rural Coalition group that exists in Colorado. This coalition group typically meets on a monthly basis and these meetings have proven to be a valuable forum for sharing program information and also for discussion and exchange of information on issues and events affecting the MSFW population.

This MSFW Project has developed formal contractual arrangements with Rocky Mountain SER. This partnering agency has provided bilingual/bicultural staff statewide that has been instrumental in the success of this project through the provision of outreach as well as other supportive services.

Another major effort through this project has been to develop and host annual training sessions that consist of best practices and effective outreach techniques for all staff that work with the Program. Additionally, staff from the Department of Labor, have attended as well as staff from other agencies that provide services to the Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker population. The success of these sessions was made possible through active collaboration among various agencies across the state to include: Region VIII RCEP, Center for Technical Assistance and Training, State and Local Migrant and Rural Coalitions, Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and other interested individuals.

In an effort to reach as many consumers as possible and enhance DVR's ability to serve this population, the Program has utilized the assistance of Express Personnel Services. Through their agency the Program has hired temporary workers who assist the counselors assigned to work with the Program, as Counselors Aides. This has significantly enhanced the Program's ability to provide timely and appropriate services for the Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers with disabilities.

Colorado DVR will submit a new grant proposal for funding. If awarded and monies are appropriated, it will provide another five year cycle of funding. This will allow new and innovative approaches for the agency to reach and serve this underserved population.

### Outreach to Employers

Outreach to employers is an important focus of service delivery in Colorado. The Division is a member of the Colorado Business Leadership Network. Counselors regularly participate with employers in training sessions and meetings, which enhances employer's awareness and understanding of the abilities of clients we serve and the employee potential they offer. Additionally, DVR collaborates with the Colorado Coalition for Persons with Disabilities to operate Colorado's annual Job Fair for Persons with Disabilities. Also, DVR has three regional federal employment specialists throughout Colorado who are actively involved in linking federal job openings with DVR-involved job seekers. These specialists also work to develop new federal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Region II counselors have formed an in-house network of Job Developers. Counselors have also developed a training package on Disability Awareness for employers. Staff also participates on the Arapahoe County Job Developers Network. Coordination and collaboration in developing new employer linkages is resulting in more employment opportunities for individuals.

### Other Collaboration

- DVR has entered into a partnership with the Denver Zoological Foundation to provide work adjustment and vocational skills training, in a zoological setting, to DVR young

consumers. It is anticipated that braiding of funds will continue in the future to support ongoing activities and possibly expansion of this effort.

- In Ft. Collins, DVR staff meets regularly with the Veterans Administration to create employment opportunities for disabled veterans.
- Under a grant from the US Department of Agriculture to the Colorado State University and the Easter Seals of Colorado, services are made available to individuals with disabilities and families to help them remain in or enter the field of agriculture. Although available statewide, services are generally provided in rural settings throughout Colorado. DVR works closely with these agencies to identify individuals who would be eligible for DVR services and coordinate the provision of rehabilitation services necessary to maintain or obtain employment in the agricultural field.
- Under a contractual agreement with DVR the Western Slope Technical Assistance Center is a collaborative, inter-agency initiative designed to build capacity in Colorado through the provision of technical assistance, training, assessments, installation and follow up assistive technology devices and a fully operational loan bank of assistive technology devices with a value in excess of \$1,000,000. Through DVR collaborative efforts with Assistive Technology Partners, there has been an increase in the employability of people with disabilities served by DVR.
- A number of agencies and workgroups and regional staff have developed grant proposals, and implemented new grants that have expanded services to persons with disabilities. These include the United Cerebral Palsy Association, which has two Projects with Industry Grants, the Colorado DeafBlind Network, the Deafness-developmental Disability Workgroup, Shalom, Platte River Industries, and the Brain Injury association of Colorado.
- DVR contracts with ten Independent Living centers through the Colorado Independent Living Core Services (CILCS) program to provide services such as independent living skills training, peer counseling (including cross-disability peer counseling), individual and systems advocacy, transportation, and housing. Each center also provides information and referral services to all individuals with disabilities who request this type of assistance or service.
- DVR also partners with the following agencies: National Federation for the Blind, Cerebral Palsy of Colorado, Craig Hospital, the Brain Injury Foundation, Denver Diaconal, Catholic Charities, Mi Casa, the Women's Bean Project, Bayaud Industries, Goodwill Industries, Aspen Diversified and other NISH contractors, hospital indigent programs, and substance abuse treatment centers.

All counselors and local supervisors have increased interactions with all vendors of services due to the Division's new Provider Agreement requirement. Working with vendors to identify their credentials and types of services available, will give clients more information to make better-informed choices about the services and vendors they choose to work with.



**ATTACHMENT 4.9 (c)(2)**

Coordination with Education Officials

**FY 2006**



## **Coordination with Education Officials**

Since 1985, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has participated with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), as well as with local school districts and Boards of Cooperative Education, in supporting a comprehensive transition planning and service delivery process for youth with disabilities. To this end, DVR has organized a Youth Unit within Field Services Administration. This Unit is responsible for assuring the quality provision of vocational rehabilitation to Colorado's youth with disabilities. As a result, the following outcomes have been realized in Colorado:

- Youth with disabilities are successfully integrating into their communities as adults, in living, working and learning situations.
- Increased collaboration is occurring among community agencies in the provision of comprehensive transition services, as a result of interagency procedures that have been put into place to support transition
- Interagency teams of providers, often operating as a local youth council, are developing processes to mitigate ineffective local rules, procedures, guidelines, and practices that have traditionally obstructed the delivery of effective and coordinated transition planning and services

Recently, the state-level agreement between the DVR and CDE has been updated and rewritten. This agreement promotes flexible and collaborative planning and service delivery among DVR, local education agencies and local school districts, and other state and community agencies for youth transitioning from school to work and/or post-school activities which will lead to employment. It promotes accessible, timely and uniform vocational rehabilitation services for all Colorado students who have a disability and require VR services. Additionally, it encourages education agencies to develop, implement and promote pre-vocational services and career exploration for students with disabilities prior to referral to DVR. Finally, it assures that VR services complement services provided by education agencies. The new agreement contains an enhancement to the previous agreement, which defines a collaborative process that can be used by DVR and local education agencies to provide assistive technology to students.

DVR will continue to monitor and assure implementation of the tenets of this agreement. The key tenets of this agreement have been developed into a desktop guide entitled, the "CDE/DVR Cooperative Services Handbook for Youth in Transition." Literally thousands of these handbooks have been distributed to youth, parents, educators, VR counselors and community-based agency providers over the past several years. DVR and CDE plan to regularly update and continually distribute these guides throughout the state.

DVR participated with CDE in the statewide Transition Outcomes Project. DVR participation was at the state and local levels. The Outcomes Project first involves data collection related to transition service delivery within local school districts. Data collection is followed by training and intervention to improve transition services. Following data collection and training intervention, follow-up data is collected to determine positive impact and improved services following training interventions. As requested by CDE, DVR will continue to be involved in this Project.

DVR participated with the Division of Youth Corrections, the Metro Lab School, and four Colorado Workforce regions to implement the federally funded YEARS demonstration Grant. YEARS was a three-phase series of transition and wrap-around services that assist students within the youth corrections system to transition from incarceration into their chosen community.

Additionally, Colorado participated with DYC and CDE in an interagency partnership to improve transition services for youth with disabilities who have been adjudicated into the DYC system. DVR committed technical assistance, training and rehabilitation counselor staff to this effort. This partnership will continue into the future, although it will be scaled back from the more expansive effort that occurred in the recent past.

DVR participated with CDE, the University of Colorado Health Science Center's WIN Partners (WIN), CP of Colorado, the Office of Workforce Development (OWD) and the CO Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) to improve the usage and accessibility of Colorado's Workforce Centers for people with disabilities, including youth with disabilities. This took place through a United States Department of Labor workforce incentive grant. This grant initially established consumer/disability program navigators and SSA benefits planners within Colorado. DVR is represented on OWD's Executive Directors "Project Train" Advisory Group for this grant. "Project Train (Training, Resources and Incentives Network)" is a state advisory group of over thirty disability-provider agencies which was established under the workforce incentive grant and which is sustained through the involvement of the original grant participants. DVR will continue to maintain an active role in promoting universal access for youth with disabilities within the workforce system, and will actively provide statewide technical assistance and training within this realm. DVR participates on Colorado's State Youth Council as an active and voting member. DVR is also represented on all of Colorado's local youth councils. Through these avenues, DVR continues to hold up the importance of improving services to youth with disabilities through the greater workforce development system.

During the past two years, DVR expanded the School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) to forty sites. These forty sites involve 132 of Colorado's 178 school districts. SWAP serves over 1800 youth annually, and is a collaborative initiative between DVR and local school districts, which is supported by CDE. The purpose of SWAP is to provide successful employment outcomes, increased community linkages, and new patterns of services for youth with disabilities who are eligible VR consumers. Colorado anticipates expansion of SWAP to forty-five sites and over 140 school districts within the next year.

During Fall of 2003, DVR collaborated with CDE, OWD, CDLE, the Colorado Community College System (CCC) and the Colorado Department of Health to apply for and receive our "State Alignment Grant for Improving Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities through the use of Intermediaries" The goals of this grant are to: improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities through the use of intermediaries; conduct resource mapping to assess the state's youth service delivery infrastructure in light of five evidence-based operating principles; and develop, implement and evaluate a cross-agency, multi-year state plan to improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities through the blending and braiding of state, federal and community resources and local intermediary organizations. DVR has committed staff to this project, and will continue to be involved through the duration of the five-year grant and beyond.

DVR collaborates with CDE and Colorado's Business Leadership Network to support the implementation of Colorado's High School High Tech (HS/HT) federal grant, which was awarded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy. HS/HT is a community-based partnership of students, parents, educators, rehabilitation professionals, and businesses. The mission of Colorado's HS/HT program is to implement an enrichment program designed to expose high school students with disabilities to a variety of career opportunities, ready them for post-secondary education, and encourage them to achieve long term success. DVR will continue to support the efforts and activities of HSHT.

DVR has partnered, and will continue to partner, with local school districts and the Denver Zoological Foundation to provide horticultural and zoological training and work experiences to students with disabilities. DVR anticipates continuation of this collaboration, which was presented at the recent international zoological horticultural conference as a national model.

DVR participates as an active member of the Colorado/Wyoming Consortium of Disability Service Providers. This Consortium boasts membership from all Colorado and most Wyoming institutions of higher education as well as from CDE. This group has worked to develop disability documentation and accommodation guidelines that support an informed transition by youth with disabilities and their families, from the secondary into the post-secondary setting. Additionally, this group holds professional development workshops on a regular basis. A recent workshop, the topic of which was Assistive Technology, was coordinated and hosted by DVR. DVR will continue to be actively involved with this group.

DVR is participating with CDE, OWD and UCHSC/WIN Partners to implement Colorado's SSA Demonstration Project, "Colorado Youth WINS." Colorado Youth WINS (Work Incentive Network of Supports) is a five-year Youth Transition Process Demonstration (YTPD) funded by Social Security Administration starting September 30, 2003. The overarching goal of the demonstration project is to remove major barriers and disincentives to work for youth, aged 14-25, who receive, or who are likely to receive SSI, SSDI or CDB in order to maximize their economic self-sufficiency and career advancement. This partnership is anticipated to continue into future years.

Colorado DVR also participates on the Colorado Transition Coalition for Youth with Special Health Care Needs. The purpose of this Healthy & Ready to Work Initiative is to support youth with special health care needs (YSHCN) in receiving the services necessary to make transitions to all aspects of adult life, including adult health care, work, and independence. DVR plans to continue involvement with this Coalition. Additionally, DVR has a cooperative arrangement with Shriners Intermountain Hospital located in Salt Lake City, Utah, to coordinate and streamline the statewide process of referral to DVR for youth who are receiving services through the Shriners Hospital system.

In January of 2004, DVR partnered with CDE to update and reprint the "Cooperative Assessment Guidelines for School Practitioners." This document is disseminated widely to school practitioners in all Colorado high schools and middle schools, and to all DVR counselors. It is intended to promote the exchange and utilization of existing and new information between school practitioners and DVR providers. DVR plans to continue to disseminate this widely throughout the state, and to update the publication as needed based on changes in law, regulation and policy.

DVR and CDE collaborate to host statewide, regional and local trainings of community transition providers, including DVR, Education and SWAP. In September of 2004, DVR hosted a statewide transition workshop that was widely attended by DVR counselors and supervisors, special education directors and transition coordinators, and SWAP providers. A primary goal of the training was to enhance coordination of services between DVR and education-based transition efforts.

In addition to collaborating with CDE to host training activities, DVR and CDE present jointly throughout the state at conferences, training events and workshops. For example, CDE and DVR presented a session on collaborative transition planning at Colorado's Colorado

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired conference which was held in of 2004. Additionally, DVR plans to present at Colorado's Adult Basic Education and Literacy and English as a Second Language statewide resource conference in the summer of 2005. Also, CDE and DVR Transition Specialists present information on transition and related changes and updates at DVR's regularly scheduled Field Services Managers Seminars and New Counselor trainings.

DVR and CDE plan to continue activities which support coordination between the two disciplines and which are designed to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in the school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services through DVR.

In addition to state-level hosted events, DVR counselors frequently outreach to students through various means. For example, they attend job and resource fairs, back-to-school nights, and parent-teacher conference nights. They present information about DVR at residential treatment centers, residential child-care facilities and at teacher in-service events. DVR plans to continue these types of outreach, education and consultation activities with our school partners.

DVR continues to be actively involved in Colorado's Disability Mentoring Day. Disability Mentoring Day promotes career development for students and job seekers with disabilities through job shadowing and hands-on career exploration.

DVR recently became involved in Colorado's Systems of Care Collaborative. This collaborative is a multi-agency endeavor, supported by the Office of the Governor. Its vision is that of a Colorado in which all children, youth, and families are able to access comprehensive, integrated and cost effective supports and services across sectors and within communities. One of the many important principles of the SOC effort is that children with emotional disturbances should be ensured smooth transitions through all major changes in their lives. Ongoing involvement in this initiative, and the role that DVR could play, will continue to be explored.

DVR has been involved since 2003 on the National Transition Leadership Summit team. The 2005 Summit will be held in June. The goal of this event is to convene state-level teams of policymakers to examine the progress made in the implementation of the strategic transition action plans developed at the 2003 Summit, and to further build state/territory capacity to improve high school experiences that lead to successful post-school outcomes for all youth.

**ATTACHMENT 4.9 (c)(3)**

Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-profit Vocational Rehabilitation Service Providers

**FY 2006**





## **Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-profit Vocational Rehabilitation Service Providers**

Private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers have been and continue to be a long-standing resource used by the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to obtain necessary services for its consumers. Cooperative relationships between DVR and providers of vocational rehabilitation services are formalized through a written Provider Agreement. The Provider Agreement process is designed to assure adherence to three procurement requirements: that all qualified vendors have the opportunity to compete for business with DVR if they choose, that all vendors will be treated equitably and will be paid for their services in accordance with a standard method of rate setting procedures, and that there will always be a written contract in place when annual expenditures to any vendor reach \$25,000, as required by State Law, while assuring continuity of service provision to consumers. This effort has resulted in a consistent structure for establishing working relationships with service providers throughout the state and at the same time helps assure equitable payment across providers for the same types of services at the least possible cost.

Our provider agreement system is market-based, meaning that services are purchased based on competitive market rates instead of provider costs. The procedures require a vendor to complete the DVR Provider Agreement form that serves to register them as potential provider of specific services. Subsequent services purchased by DVR are limited to those identified on the agreement for which the vendor is registered. Execution of the Provider Agreement obligates vendors to meet certain qualifications related to standards that have been developed by DVR for the provision of specific services. Vendors also agree to abide by the established payment procedures and rates for each service DVR might purchase. Registration as a DVR vendor does not obligate vendors to provide services to DVR consumers nor does it obligate DVR to purchase services from any given vendor.

Initial approval of the Provider Agreement, once signed by the vendor, is done at the local DVR field office prior to approval by the Department of Human Services and the State Controller. This method encourages the DVR field office and the service provider to establish a strong understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities in the provision of services to consumers. It also puts the responsibility on the DVR field office supervisor to review the agreement for consistency between services offered and appropriate compliance with standards and credentials prior to their approval. Specific services identified on the Individual Plan for Employment are authorized by DVR counselors.

DVR believes that these procedures help ensure that adequate contracting procedures are used; purchases of services and goods maximize the efficient and effective use of public funds; services and goods will only be purchased from qualified providers; all vendors who wish to provide services to DVR consumers have the opportunity to do so and are subject to a consistent set of terms and conditions; and most importantly, DVR's consumers will have a wide range of options to choose from when selecting service providers.

In the past, DVR utilized establishment grant contracts for the establishment, development, or improvement of public or other non-profit community rehabilitation programs. Although a majority of individuals with disabilities served through the establishment grant contracts were not DVR consumers at the beginning of the contracts, many became DVR consumers over the three-year period of the establishment grant contracts. However, a change in federal regulations that limited the group of individuals served under establishment grant contracts to individuals who were either DVR applicants or DVR-eligible individuals (and a corresponding

DVR policy that required community rehabilitation programs to provide a list of DVR consumers with their billing form to be paid for services provided) resulted in a significant decrease in the interest level for establishment grants, as community rehabilitation did not wish to develop new services or new patterns of services that would only benefit DVR consumers and not their non-DVR consumers as well. As a result, applications responding to the Establishment Grant Contracts RFP from community rehabilitation programs significantly decreased. It became exceedingly difficult to attract a broad variety of community rehabilitation programs to apply for establishment grant contracts, especially in the rural areas of the state. Therefore, DVR decided not to continue the establishment grant contracts effective state fiscal year 2002.

**ATTACHMENT 4.9 (c)(4)**

Evidence of Collaboration Regarding  
Supported Employment Services and Extended Services

**FY 2006**



## **Evidence of Collaboration Regarding Supported Employment Services and Extended Services**

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Office of Workforce Development, the Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC), Mental Health Service Organizations, Division for Developmental Disabilities (DDD), Division of Mental Health (DMH) and employers have an extensive history of collaborative and cooperative efforts to provide supported employment opportunities in Colorado for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The 1998 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 further emphasizes the need for state agencies and other entities to develop innovative cooperative agreements as a strategy to leverage State/Federal dollars and encourage inter-agency cooperation. Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation believes that expansion of supported employment to all individuals needing supports to maintain competitive, integrated employment cannot be accomplished without such collaborative efforts.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) maintains formal statewide cooperative agreements with Division for Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and Division of Mental Health (DMH). These agreements identify plans for the provision of supported employment services for individuals with the most significant developmental disabilities, including mental illness. Both agreements provide for collaboration in the provision of intensive supported employment services, and stipulate, at a minimum, referral processes, specific services to be provided, provisions for training and technical assistance, responsibilities of each agency, standards of performance, and methods to evaluate performance. Each agreement is reviewed annually and amended when appropriate.

### Division for Developmental Disabilities (DDD), Department of Human Services

The cooperative agreement between DVR and DDD is established for the purpose of clarifying the relative roles and responsibilities of both agencies in the provision of supported employment services to individuals with the most significant developmental disabilities. This agreement requires collaborative planning and coordination of services by the DDD community services agency and DVR to avoid duplication of services and, thereby, maximize available resources. As a result of this collaboration, much has been achieved in making community-based, integrated employment available for persons with developmental disabilities.

Under this agreement, DVR is responsible for the provision of intensive supported employment services, including, but not limited to, job coach training. However, due to the expertise and proven history of DDD in training individuals with the most significant developmental disabilities, the local DDD community service provider is normally used by the rehabilitation counselor to provide such training and other intensive supported employment services. The collaborative agreement identifies administrative and fiscal requirements governing payment for supported employment services. The DDD community service provider must be registered with DVR under a Provider Agreement to be able to provide supported employment services to DVR consumers. Services are thus reimbursed in accordance with DVR's fee schedule and service providers must meet the standards and credentials as required for the provision of specified supported employment services. This cooperative arrangement is no longer based on DVR's approval of Pilot Projects for the purchase of intensive supported employment services from a variety of DDS community service providers. Rather, systems have been designed to encourage local level development of supported employment strategies between all DVR field offices and DDS supported employment service providers registered under a Provider Agreement. DVR plans on assessing the effectiveness of this arrangement in terms of numbers of persons served and numbers of successful rehabilitation closures in relation to funds expended under the agreement. During SFY 2006, DVR will use Title I and Title VI B funds to purchase intensive supported employment services for at least 1,500

individuals with developmental disabilities at an approximate amount of \$436,000.00. DVR will also use approximately \$5,000.00 of Title I training funds to provide joint training activities for both DVR counselors and staff of DDD staff and supported employment service providers to assure that both understand and implement best practices in the provision of supported employment services. It is believed that training efforts involving staff from both entities creates an opportunity to build collaborative efforts at the local level, give opportunities for staff from various parts of the state to share ideas and resources, and lead towards improved outcomes for persons served.

#### Division of Mental Health, Department of Human Services

Division of Mental Health (DMH) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) have maintained a formal cooperative agreement to provide vocational services to individuals with the most significant mental health disabilities. This agreement represents a collaborative effort to increase access to quality vocational services and to ensure the availability of supported employment opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities due to mental illness. The agreement stipulates collaborative planning and coordination of services by the local mental health service organizations and rehabilitation offices to eliminate duplication of services and maximize available resources. It also contains provisions for purchase of intensive supported employment services, including transitional employment services, from DMH. Such services are only purchased from vendors approved by both DMH and DVR, such as mental health centers, clinics, and other agencies or community-based programs. However, the rehabilitation counselor and consumer are responsible for determining the appropriate services and developing the supported employment Individualized Plan for Employment. As with the DDS cooperative agreement, service providers must be registered with DVR under a Provider Agreement to provide supported employment services under the DVR/MHS cooperative agreement. Under this agreement, Title I funds will be used to purchase supported employment services for a minimum of 250 individuals at an approximate cost of \$907,674.00 during SFY 05.

In addition to improved service delivery for each eligible individual, there has been a substantial increase in cooperation between local mental health centers and local rehabilitation offices, which has resulted in a significant increase in the numbers of individuals receiving supported employment services. Improvements have been realized in interagency planning, training, information sharing, and resolving mutual programmatic and procedural concerns. There has also been a substantial increase in cooperation at the State level between DVR and DMH. Pursuant to this goal, an operations committee was established to facilitate interaction between rehabilitation offices and mental health centers and to monitor and evaluate performance under the agreement. The committee is composed of staff from both agencies as well as the Colorado Association of Clinics and Community Mental Health Centers, who are knowledgeable in budget and fiscal issues, program evaluation and quality assurance, policy, field operations, supported employment, and contracts. Ongoing meetings have been conducted to identify issues of mutual concern and to jointly explore and evaluate for future policy development as a means of collaborative problem resolution. This has resulted in a strengthening of communication and a greater understanding of missions, values, policies, rules and regulations, funding structure, and service delivery models of both State systems. In SFY 2006, DVR and DMH will continue to utilize this structure to enhance the effectiveness of collaborative provision of supported employment services to individuals with most significant disabilities due to mental illness.

Collaboration in the provision of supported employment services is an ongoing process, and numerous other efforts are in the planning and development stages. Through the use of satellite technology DVR is able to offer training on state of the art supported employment technology.

These trainings are made available to DVR counselors and anyone else interested in supported employment on a statewide basis. Especially encouraging is the ability to offer such training to rural areas. Beginning in FFY 2004, DVR began a relationship with the University of Colorado's Health Sciences Center to expand the availability of resources for assistive technology. This relationship will continue into FFY 2006. DVR will also continue to work closely with the Association for Persons in Supported Employment. This entity is very involved in education and public policy concerning supported employment and has a component to market to employers. The Center for Technical Assistance and Training (CTAT) provides technical assistance to local DVR offices and various DDD service providers on a statewide basis in the area of supported employment. Through a RSA grant CTAT has developed a Self-Directed Supported Employment program that focuses on consumer choice and interest. Collaboration between DVR and CTAT has led to successful consumer driven job search efforts and positive employment outcomes for DVR consumers.

The greatest challenge facing the supported employment program is to solidify adequate funding for the ongoing extended support services necessary to assist individuals with the most significant disabilities in maintaining community-based employment. In Colorado, collaboration among relevant State agencies, private nonprofit organizations and other community resources for the provision of extended ongoing support services takes many forms, ranging from informally established local cooperative working relationships between direct providers and consumers of supported employment services to formally negotiated statewide agreements among State agencies. Informal working agreements are developed to coordinate activities, such as transition from intensive supported employment services to extended services, the types of extended services to be provided, training of qualified individuals to provide extended support, job development for extended transitional employment, and referral to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) for post-employment services. The primary entities involved in these types of collaborative efforts are local rehabilitation offices, local school districts, Work Force Centers, independent living centers, local community rehabilitation programs, mental health centers, developmental disabilities service providers and other available service providers, including advocates and family members. In some locations, local consortiums have been formed, and some of these groups have received financial support from the local, State and/or Federal level. However, funding for extended support services is still insufficient in most local communities. Therefore, although supported employment depends on these informal collaborative efforts, more efforts are needed to enhance the availability of extended support services following termination of intensive supported employment services authorized under Titles I and VI, Part B of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

**ATTACHMENT 4.11 (b)**

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

**FY 2006**





## **Comprehensive System of Personnel Development**

The Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has a strong commitment to employing and retaining an adequate workforce of qualified vocational rehabilitation personnel, both professional and paraprofessional.

Collection and Analysis of Data. DVR currently has access to two existing data systems that identify the number of persons employed by DVR by personnel category. The primary one is maintained by the Department of Human Services' (DHS) Personnel Office. This is the database that maintains payroll information on employees, including their dates of hire, official job classifications, and home addresses. An additional database is maintained internally within DVR. It contains information on offices to which staff are assigned, functional job titles, and caseload information. The Human Resource Development Specialist uses these two databases as well as additional paper records to continuously gather and analyze information about the qualifications of the 214 full time positions held by DVR staff.

Currently, of the 214 full time positions within DVR, 110 of them are vocational rehabilitation counselors. The remaining 104 full time positions consist of administrative assistants, program assistants, district and regional supervisors, job placement specialists, rehabilitation teachers, orientation and mobility instructors, Business Enterprise staff and central office administrative staff.

The ratio of the number of vocational rehabilitation counselors to the number of consumers currently being served in applicant and active statuses (02 through 24, excluding 08) is approximately 1 vocational rehabilitation counselor for every 115 consumers. The ratio of vocational rehabilitation counselors to field support staff is approximately 3 to 1.

Projections of the number of individuals to be served, including those with significant disabilities, are based on projected increases for the general population and incidence rates for disabilities, using Colorado census data and State demographics. These projections, in combination with DVR attrition and retirement rates, are used to predict personnel needs for the next five years.

The attrition rate of DVR staff now averages about 10%, or approximately 20 staff per year. DVR has recalculated its projected turnover for the next five years, and it is projected that approximately 40 staff will leave, of which 25 will be vocational rehabilitation counselors, 10 will be support staff and 5 will be supervisory and administrative staff. DVR believes that the administrative and supervisory staff will be filled from current counselors. Thus, DVR anticipates the need to recruit approximately 25 vocational rehabilitation counselors and 10 support staff over the next five years in order to maintain its current level of services. These projections are based on current available information related to staff tenure and the state of Colorado retirement system. However, there is legislation currently being proposed that would offer additional retirement incentives to state employees and, if passed, may increase the projected staff departures. The Human Resource Development specialist will monitor this and take action accordingly.

Current Status of Qualified Personnel. Of the 105 individuals currently in filled rehabilitation counselor positions within DVR, 102 of them are either Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC) or are qualified to sit for the CRC exam. 3 counselors do not yet fully meet the qualifications. Of these 3, 1 is currently enrolled in a graduate program that will result in qualification to take the CRC exam in the next 2 years. The remaining two individuals have

recently been hired using the rehabilitation counseling intern classification and will be completing CSPD education plans within the next 6 years.

Coordination with Institutions of Higher Education. Colorado currently has only one educational program that specifically prepares vocational rehabilitation professionals. The University of Northern Colorado (UNC), which is located in Greeley, operates Master's level programs that prepare vocational rehabilitation counselors, rehabilitation counselors with an emphasis in vocational evaluation, and orientation and mobility instructors. Graduates of the rehabilitation counseling programs possess the credentials necessary for certification in rehabilitation counseling (CRC). In addition, those completing the program with an emphasis in vocational evaluation also have the credentials necessary for certification in vocational evaluation (CVE). Orientation and mobility instructors graduate with the credentials necessary for certification through the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP). Faculty at UNC indicates that approximately twenty-five individuals are currently enrolled in either the rehabilitation counseling program or the program that offers this dual emphasis.

The Division also coordinates with Adams State College in Alamosa, Colorado. Adams State caters to many of Colorado's rural areas and offers a master's program in community counseling from which several current staff have graduated. This program comes close to meeting all of the requirements for CRC eligibility. Individuals graduating from the program qualify for employment at DVR as a Rehabilitation Intern and need only to demonstrate a period of "acceptable employment experience" to be fully CRC eligible. Furthermore, Adams State College is located in the San Luis Valley, an area of the state with a high representation of individuals of Hispanic background, which helps increase the availability of individuals with minority backgrounds. Finally, Adams State continues to express interest in obtaining the CORE credential and developing and offering a Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling.

In addition, DVR maintains an ongoing relationship with several other CORE accredited Rehabilitation Counseling programs including Utah State University, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, University of Kentucky and San Diego State University. All of these programs offer distance education programs are especially convenient for staff who work in areas of the State that are beyond commuting distance from the UNC program in Greeley, as well as those whose disabilities limit their mobility.

DVR's plan for recruiting qualified personnel, including qualified individuals from minority backgrounds and individuals with disabilities, includes collaboration with all of the relevant educational programs mentioned above as well as several additional graduate programs with programs in vocational rehabilitation. DVR also recruits using the Oklahoma Clearinghouse website to post counselor openings. The state of Colorado has issued a waiver to DVR to enable the hiring of qualified counselors from outside of the state. This continues to be beneficial in recruiting efforts.

DVR believes that the private sector is another good resource for recruiting experienced, competent staff. Through its relationship with the Colorado Rehabilitation Association and the Colorado Rehabilitation Counseling Association, as well as the professional associations for other disciplines, DVR maintains a network for recruiting vocational rehabilitation counselors who have experience in the private sector.

Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce is an expectation for supervisors and is reflected in their performance plans. This has proven to be an effective tool in balancing the diversity of

staff to represent all consumers. DVR is also in a position to offer all accommodations necessary to recruit and retain qualified staff with disabilities who may need accommodations to successfully compete for and do their job when hired.

Personnel Standards. Colorado does not have State-approved or recognized certification, licensing or registration requirements for many of the personnel classifications used by DVR, specifically rehabilitation counselors. In collaboration with Personnel, DVR has established its qualifications to be consistent with the highest national standard, the CRC, for vocational rehabilitation counselors and interns.

One of the levels at which counselors can be recruited is the Rehabilitation Intern level. This requires a Master's degree but allows a total of six years after employment for a candidate with a Master's degree in a counseling related field to complete the necessary coursework to be eligible to take the CRC. When necessary, recruiting at this level can bring in individuals from diverse backgrounds, allowing them to upgrade their qualifications while working under closer supervision. This option is especially useful in outlying areas of the state such as Alamosa and Sterling.

The qualifications are as follows:

#### **REHABILITATION COUNSELOR I:**

##### Requirements:

Graduation from an accredited college or university with a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or possession of a current Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential that was issued by the Commission for Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) or be eligible to apply for the CRC credential.

#### **REHABILITATION COUNSELOR INTERN:**

##### Requirements:

1. Graduation from an accredited college or university with a Master's degree in one of the following: Counseling, Rehabilitation Teaching, Education, Orientation and Mobility, Psychology, Social Work, Sociology, Behavioral Science or Human Services.

For the Intern classification, individuals are required to complete required coursework to meet the minimum qualifications for a Rehabilitation Counselor within 5 years after State certification as a condition of continued employment.

DVR implemented a CSPD tuition assistance policy in March of 2000 for those individuals who need additional training in order to meet the established qualifications. The policy requires individuals who do not currently meet the standard to develop and implement individual education plans. These plans have been phased in over several years, in order to spread out the costs and minimize the loss of productivity. DVR provides full tuition assistance as well as purchasing of required books for those needing to take additional coursework. The Human Resource Development Specialist works with individuals and their supervisors to ensure that training plans are in place and implemented appropriately in order to meet CSPD requirements. In-Service Training funds are the primary source for any financial assistance that is provided to employees needing to upgrade their qualifications.

Every effort possible is made to recruit fully qualified staff, in the event someone is hired at the above-mentioned intern level, a specific plan for education and oversight is developed and implemented. It is anticipated that the Intern level will be used only when, due to special skills requirements (e.g., American Sign Language or Spanish) or geographic area, it is not feasible to recruit current CRC eligible level staff.

Other professional staff, such as job developers, are recruited as vocational rehabilitation counselors with special areas of emphasis, so they must meet the same requirements, with specific qualifications relevant to their assignment. This is a requirement of Colorado's state personnel system. For vocational rehabilitation counselors who will be serving large numbers of consumers who are deaf, there is a separate screening to determine their skills in American Sign Language communications. Orientation and mobility instructors and rehabilitation teachers must be eligible for certification in their discipline by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP).

Communication with Diverse Populations. Approximately 20.6% of the individuals who apply for DVR services are Hispanic, 1% are Native American, and 1.2% are Asian American. Of these minority populations, it is estimated that more than 75% are able to speak and comprehend English. At the present time, at least 50% of DVR's field offices have one or more staff members who speak fluent Spanish, and all offices in the areas most heavily populated with Hispanics have at least one staff member who is also Hispanic. Other staff members have completed intensive Spanish-language training programs, with the goal of achieving a functional level of fluency. In addition, all offices have access to translation resources.

All communities with a significantly large population of individuals who are deaf are assigned at least one staff member who is proficient in American Sign Language. In the past when none of the applicants for the position possessed sign language skills, the individual who was hired was sent to the intensive sign language training program for vocational rehabilitation counselors for the deaf out of state. This training was supplemented with classroom instruction in sign language. There are approximately seven community-based organizations throughout Colorado that provide interpreting services as well as numerous private vendors, and offices without staff members who can interpret have local agreements with these organizations and individuals to provide interpreting services. Approximately 25 students are currently enrolled in the Interpreter Preparation Program at Front Range Community College, and this is expected to sufficiently address future interpreter needs. Every DVR office in the State has a TDD for communication with individuals who are deaf, and a telephone relay service is available through Colorado's local telephone provider.

The capacity to provide materials in Braille is available through equipment located in the Administrative Office and at the Denver Metro Office. Additional needs are addressed through the Boulder Public Library and private transcribers. This has been adequately meeting the current level of need. Many consumers, at this time, prefer materials on computer disk, and this is accommodated routinely. Materials are also routinely made available in large print.

Staff Development. Each year, DVR receives a grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) which is dedicated to providing in-service training for DVR staff. As part of the application process, an assessment of training needs is conducted, utilizing information from a variety of sources, including needs identified by staff as well as feedback from the State Rehabilitation Council, the State plan hearings, the consumer satisfaction data, results of State-

wide studies and analyses, Federal and State audits, and Federally-mandated priorities. This needs assessment is used to design the training plan which will best fit the most common needs of different categories of staff, including, as appropriate, training on the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Social Security work incentive programs, informed choice and other provisions of the 1998 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, and culturally diverse populations. In addition to the RSA grant, DVR allocates additional necessary funds to ensure that all training needs are met. When supervisors identify skill deficits of individual staff members, appropriate training in the community may be arranged for and sponsored through in-service training. In-service training funds are also used to send staff to workshops, seminars, conferences, and formal training programs, including relevant graduate work, as well as for participation in training provided via distance education models.

Staff members who aspire to supervisory or administrative roles are encouraged and supported to take advantage of the Department of Personnel Supervisory Certificate Program and the Department of Human Services Supervisory Training and Review (STAR) program. The Department's Staff Development unit also continues to conduct two leadership programs to prepare individuals for leadership and administrative positions. DVR's succession planning further indicates that there will be an ongoing need for vocational rehabilitation counseling staff who are eligible for the CRC and DVR will continue recruitment efforts accordingly.

DVR does seek to take advantage of all relevant training opportunities for its staff. Through the Department of Human Services DVR staff will continue to be able to obtain quality training on diversity, equity and cultural competency. Leadership training is one of the top priorities for the Region VIII Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program, and DVR will take full advantage of the training that they produce.

DVR has been and will continue to incorporate the principles of informed choice into all aspects of new training curricula including policy and procedural training as well as assistive technology training provided to DVR counselors. Such training efforts will include a focus on helping consumers develop skills necessary to analyze their own strengths, resources, capacities, concerns, priorities, abilities, interests, etc. so that they can come to their own informed conclusions related to the development of their rehabilitation program. DVR believes that these efforts will help counselors become better facilitators and help consumers develop better skills to become more independent and self directed, as they go through the rehabilitation process.

DVR is committed to maintaining a staff with state-of-the-art skills and knowledge of vocational rehabilitation theory and practice. A library of materials, in a variety of formats, including print, audio tape, video tape, and CD-ROM, is maintained as part of the In-Service Training program. Staff are encouraged to check out materials which will assist them in better serving individuals with disabilities. DVR regularly reviews the offerings available through a variety of sources, including the National Clearing House of Rehabilitation Training Materials, and orders those which will add value to its collection. The Region VIII Rehabilitation Continuing Education program also maintains a library of materials, which are available for loan. DVR's future plans involve making optimal use of computerization, including the Internet and Intranet, to stay current on research findings and state-of-the-art advances and to disseminate materials to staff.

#### Coordination of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development and In-service Training.

As part of its implementation of transitions services and DVR's School-to-Work Alliance Program (SWAP), DVR has a contract with the Colorado Department of Education to provide training and technical assistance to DVR counselors and local education staff to enable them to

work more effectively with students as they are transitioning from school to work. (See FY 2006 Attachment 4.9(c) for more information concerning training efforts in conjunction with that provided under IDEA and the SWAP program.) DVR counselors serving SWAP youth and the school district employees with whom they partner are also being provided copies of the new counselor training modules developed by the Region VIII RCEP. In-Service Training funds are used to provide continuing education for staff, with a special priority for rehabilitation technology needs and communications skills.

State Rehabilitation Council. State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) regularly reviews and comments on various plans, policies, and procedures concerning recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel; personnel standards; staff development; and, the performance evaluation system. Their comments and recommendations are incorporated, where appropriate. This has happened at regular meetings with the SRC and through its committee structure. The Policy and Procedures committee of the SRC reviews and offers feedback on all sections of the State Plan prior to its submission. They will continue to participate in future efforts relating to refinement of personnel standards and performance assessment measures.

**ATTACHMENT 4.12**

Assessment; Estimates; Goals and Priorities; Strategies; and Progress Reports

**FY 2006**





**ATTACHMENT 4.12 (a)**

Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals  
with Disabilities and the Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation  
Programs

**FY 2006**



## **Results of the Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities**

In an ongoing effort to assess the extent and nature of services and programs necessary to meet the vocational rehabilitation needs of Colorado's residents with significant disabilities, the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) conducts an extensive ongoing needs assessment, seeking input from a variety of sources and employing both informal and formal methods of data collection.

Regularly throughout the year, DVR receives feedback from the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council, and through face-to-face interactions with individuals and entities in the community with whom DVR has developed collaborative working relationships, such as the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. DVR has found that these interactions have always yielded valuable information that it uses to develop and implement new programs and/or make adjustments to existing programs and services.

To supplement the informal feedback collected through these mechanisms, DVR conducted a formal needs assessment study during the summer and fall of 2004, in which 1,645 paper needs assessment surveys were sent to agencies and organizations in Colorado representing community rehabilitation programs, mental health, education, advocacy organizations, independent living centers, health and medical facilities, substance abuse providers, county human services agencies, and job developers in all areas of the state. A similar survey was sent to all DVR employees who interact with individuals with disabilities in our vocational rehabilitation offices on a day-to-day basis, and was also made available to consumers who entered these offices during a three-week period in August. The purpose of these surveys was to assess the need for the various vocational rehabilitation services provided through DVR, and the extent to which DVR's service delivery system has met those needs. Of the 1,645 surveys distributed to DVR's partners and providers, 410 were returned for analysis. Provider respondents represented the needs of individuals with visual, developmental, hearing, orthopedic, mental and emotional, learning, and TBI impairments. While most providers served individuals on the Front Range, responses were received from providers statewide. Sixty-five DVR employees from field offices across the state completed a similar survey, as did 144 consumers. Consumers who responded reported the following disabilities:

Orthopedic/physical	60
Mental/emotional	48
Learning	23
Visual	19
Neurological or TBI	15
Hearing	14
Developmental	7
Other	17

DVR received additional feedback from approximately 50 DVR consumers through four public hearings conducted in various areas of Colorado. The purpose of these hearings was to solicit feedback from consumers regarding the services they have received from DVR and suggestions for improving vocational rehabilitation services in the future.

## Results of Colorado's Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and DVR's Response to the Needs

All of the strategies employed to conduct the comprehensive needs assessment provided beneficial sources of information and data concerning the vocational rehabilitation needs of Colorado's residents with disabilities, particularly those with significant and most significant disabilities. The information received through the formal mechanisms served to validate and confirm the informal feedback that was gathered throughout the year.

The needs of individuals with disabilities can be categorized into 9 areas: job finding and job placement services; training; transportation; restoration services; evaluation and diagnostic services; information and referral services; educational and vocational training; services to the deaf community; and bureaucracy of the DVR process.

1. Job finding and job placement services: The need for more effective job finding and job placement services was voiced universally and through all mechanisms employed to solicit feedback. It emerged as one of the highest needs in 2004. The survey results clearly identify the need for individuals to be provided with more intensive job searches that result in successful placements.

*The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation agrees that more effective job finding and job placement services are needed in order to achieve a higher number of successful employment outcomes. Responding to a 36% cut in general fund dollars over the past three years, DVR had to eliminate its internal job development and marketing unit, which provided these services internally, and was successful. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find external job placement providers who deliver high quality services, especially in the rural areas of Colorado. Providers who have traditionally placed individuals more successfully tend to have long waiting lists, and some providers are selective about the types of disabilities they will serve. Improving the quality of job placements is a goal for DVR in fiscal year 2006. A number of strategies have been identified for achieving this goal, which can be found in attachment 4.12(c)(1).*

2. Training: The need for more, and more effective, training and support (i.e., adjustment training, job coaching, on-the-job training, assistive technology, and formal schooling) prior to placement in a paid employment setting was recognized as one of the highest needs in 2004.

*The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation considers job coaching, adjustment training, and on-the-job training to offer one of the best opportunities for individuals with most significant disabilities to secure and maintain gainful employment in integrated work settings within the community. These services are provided to enable individuals, particularly those with most significant disabilities, to obtain career outcomes, to learn job skills, and to maximize their hour and wage employment opportunities in the competitive workforce. DVR will continue to provide these services as needed for all eligible individuals, including those with a supported employment plan. DVR believes that the growing need for these types of training services cannot be met by vocational rehabilitation agencies alone, but requires the collaborative efforts of a variety of service providers. DVR continues to build networks and productive working relationships with providers of these services to ensure that it has the capacity to provide them when*

necessary. It is the policy of DVR to plan and provide for formal schooling for a consumer when it is necessary for that individual to achieve his or her chosen employment outcome. DVR plans to review its policies and procedures to ensure that it has not created any artificial roadblocks to providing these services. DVR has also identified a number of strategies that will be employed in FY 2006 aimed at increasing the amount of assistive technology training available to consumers. These strategies can be found in attachment 4.12(d)(1).

3. Transportation: The need for more public transportation options and alternatives to public transportation for employment purposes were, once again, identified as a need. This need was magnified for individuals needing transportation during the early morning and late night hours, and for individuals residing outside of public transportation boundaries. Access-a-ride, a transportation program for individuals unable to access the city busses due to the nature of their disabilities, is available only in the larger metropolitan areas of Colorado, and was cited as an unreliable alternative.

*DVR provides transportation services to individuals who are applicants or eligible for vocational rehabilitation services to the extent that they are available. The unavailability and unreliability of accessible transportation clearly hinders the vocational endeavors of individuals with most significant disabilities. DVR actively advocates for the development and/or expansion of such services and plans to represent the interests of individuals with disabilities in various transportation initiatives during FY 2006. One such initiative in which DVR will be involved is the "Getting There" project, funded through Rose Community Foundation. Its purpose is to identify all of the transportation options and methods by which transportation is funded/paid for in the state. Ultimately, it will give us a body of data that identifies the major gaps in the state as far as public and accessible transportation are concerned.*

4. Medical assessments, diagnostic, and restoration services: A need that has surfaced in recent years, and again in 2004, involves access to timely, convenient, and affordable medical assessments and services geared toward the treatment of chronic or ongoing physical and mental impairments.

*The lack of affordable health care to address medical maintenance needs such as ongoing disability-related medications and therapy – even for persons receiving Medicare and Medicaid – is not unique to Colorado. It is one of the most intractable problems that this agency and its consumers struggle with. Increasingly, eligible individuals look to DVR as their medical insurance provider, and DVR is being requested to provide for routine and ongoing medical needs that go considerably beyond what the Rehabilitation Act, as amended under Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, defines as physical or mental restoration services. In addition, when DVR believes that it is appropriate to provide for ongoing health care needs during the vocational rehabilitation program, consumers are frequently reluctant to have their service records closed because their employment does not provide health insurance. There are a number of resources located locally and throughout the U.S. that provide low-cost prescriptions for a variety of medications, including psychotropic drugs. These resources have enabled counselors, in many cases, to assist consumers to obtain the medication they need at affordable prices. DVR plans to conduct a more thorough evaluation of the ongoing needs for individuals with mental impairments in FY 2006.*

*In addition, DVR recognizes that there are only a limited number of providers willing to provide evaluations, assessments, and medical services under its current provider agreement fee schedule, particularly outside of the Front Range area. Thus, it is often difficult for DVR to provide these services even when they are necessary and appropriate for eligibility determination and/or for the eligible individual to attain his chosen employment outcome. DVR has determined that it is feasible to raise fees paid for medical services effective July 1, 2005. We are currently in the process of identifying the specific services and details associated with the fee increases. In addition, DVR is exploring the possibility of entering into a collaborative agreement with other agencies that utilize these services and, due to their volume, receive them at a discounted cost.*

5. Information and referral services: Both consumers and providers have acknowledged a need for consumers to be informed in a more standard and independent manner about all of the services that are available to them through DVR.

*The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation strives to provide as much information as possible to consumers regarding the services available to them throughout the vocational rehabilitation process. Each field office displays a menu of rehabilitation services available to consumers. During the IPE planning process, counselors are expected to provide the consumer with a description of the services available to help them make informed choices about their employment plan. Within each description, however, there are a wide variety of services that are available based on an individual's needs. Describing each of these services in great detail may lead to the assumption that anyone eligible for DVR's services can access any of the services that DVR provides, which is not necessarily the case. The services that are available depend greatly on the individual's needs, as determined through a comprehensive assessment with the individual. In addition to the information exchange that takes place on an individual basis between the consumer and counselor, DVR has a number of brochures available to the public that describe the services available. These brochures are currently undergoing revisions to make them more descriptive. Once they have been revised, they will be made available in each DVR office, as well as in organizations that typically refer clients to DVR. In addition, DVR is currently in the process of developing a new web page that will describe the services offered to consumers.*

6. Services to the deaf community: The deaf community perceives an inadequate level of service and an ineffective service delivery infrastructure. A need has been identified for VR staff to be better trained to understand the culture of deafness and to provide services to individuals who are deaf in a more effective manner. In addition, assistive technology for individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired is inadequate, and the interpreters used by DVR are under-qualified to provide high-quality interpreting services.

*Improving the effectiveness of DVR's service delivery process for individuals who are deaf has been set as a goal for DVR for FY 2006. Currently, DVR has at least one staff member who is proficient in American Sign Language assigned to each community in Colorado with a significantly large population of individuals who are deaf. DVR also utilizes the services of seven community-based organizations throughout Colorado who provide interpreting services. In addition, DVR has approximately 30 students enrolled in the Interpreter Preparation Program at Front Range Community College, and this is expected to sufficiently address future interpreter needs. Every DVR office in the State*

*has a TDD for communication with individuals who are deaf, and a telephone relay service is available through Colorado's local telephone provider. In FY 2006, DVR plans to conduct a thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of the services it provides to individuals who are deaf and hearing impaired. Based on the results of the evaluation, DVR will determine what modifications or process changes are necessary to increase the quality of services provided to individuals from this population. This strategy is described in more detail in attachment 4.12(c)(1).*

7. **Bureaucracy:** There is a need to reduce the level of bureaucracy and red tape associated with receiving services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, including reducing the amount of work required for consumers to complete DVR's paperwork, obtain medical reports, cooperate with billing requirements and locate and secure a job on their own.

*DVR acknowledges that the paperwork currently required of applicants and eligible individuals can be overwhelming, especially if they complete them without the assistance of a vocational rehabilitation staff member. It is an expectation that all counselors assist consumers in completing the paperwork in whatever ways are necessary. This expectation will be reinforced with counselors and incorporated into future training initiatives.*

### **Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation uses private and non-profit community rehabilitation programs to provide a large majority of the goods and/or services that DVR consumers receive as part of their individualized plans for employment. Prior to July 1, 2003, DVR routinely used establishment grants aimed at establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs to address the unmet needs of individuals with disabilities. Due to funding shortfalls and changes in the federal regulations, these grants were discontinued on July 1, 2003. Since this time, DVR has found it to be a more effective process for individual DVR counselors to establish and maintain relationships with community rehabilitation programs in their local geographic areas. In fact, in addition to the cooperative agreements that DVR maintains on a statewide level, local field staff have developed a number of less formal partnerships with community rehabilitation programs, as described in sections 4.9(c). These partnerships have helped DVR play an indirect role in developing and/or improving these programs, without necessarily providing funding for them.

Currently, DVR is working in close collaboration with the Statewide Independent Living Council to improve the core services that they provide, particularly to those individuals who are blind. DVR currently maintains separate contracts with six of the ten Independent Living Centers and the Colorado Center for the Blind (CCB), through the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) Program, to provide independent living services to individuals who are 55 or older whose significant visual impairments make competitive employment extremely difficult to attain, but for whom independent living goals are feasible.



**ATTACHMENT 4.12 (b)**

Annual Estimates of Individuals to Be Served and Costs of Services

**FY 2006**



## Annual Estimates of Individuals to Be Served and Costs of Services

Due to DVR's waiting list, DVR does not anticipate that it will provide vocational rehabilitation services to substantially more individuals than during 2005. Approximately 6,700 individuals will be provided diagnostic services pursuant to determining eligibility. Of the 14,475 eligible individuals that DVR anticipates it will provide vocational rehabilitation services to, it is estimated that 13,411 individuals will receive services provided with funds under Title I part B of the Act and that 1,064 individuals will receive services provided with funds under Title VI part B of the Act. The number of eligible individuals served by priority category and the estimated service costs to be achieved between July 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006 appear on the following chart.

### ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS AND SERVICE COSTS BY PRIORITY CATEGORY\* July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006

	Eligible Individuals	Service Costs
Individuals with most significant disabilities	7102	\$7,921,445
Individuals with significant disabilities	6822	\$6,896,002
Individuals with least significant disabilities	551	\$387,526
<b>TOTALS</b>	14,475	\$15,204,974

\*This does not include an additional \$1,135,877 that is expected to be spent on assessment services provided pursuant to eligibility. This estimate also assumes that DVR's wait list will remain in effect for FY 2006.

**ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c)(1)**

State's Goals and Priorities

**FY 2006**



## State's Goals and Priorities

Based on the results of the comprehensive statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities that were described in section 4.12(a) of this state plan, as well as DVR's internal needs, DVR collaborated with the State Rehabilitation Council to establish priorities and goals for FY 2006, which resulted in the development of two core priorities and goals to support each.

### Priority #1: Increase the number and quality of employment outcomes.

Goals	Measures*
<p><b>Goal #1:</b> Improve the effectiveness of DVR's service delivery process for all individuals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of successful post-IPE closures.</li> <li>• Percentage of all post-IPE closures that were closed successfully.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal #2:</b> Improve the effectiveness of DVR's service delivery process for individuals who are deaf and for individuals who have mental health needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of all deaf or hard-of-hearing post-IPE closures that were closed successfully.</li> <li>• Percentage of all mental health post-IPE closures that were closed successfully.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal #3:</b> Improve the quality of job placements for all individuals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of successful closures that are in competitive employment.</li> <li>• Average hourly wage for successful competitive closures.</li> <li>• Average difference between weekly wages earned at application and at closure.</li> <li>• Percentage of successful closures whose primary support is "self".</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal #4:</b> Increase the availability of consumer training intended to increase their skill in using assistive technology that allows them to more effectively participate in their rehabilitation program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of consumers receiving assistive technology training services.</li> <li>• Number of consumers receiving computer access training services.</li> <li>• Number of vendors DVR has available for assistive technology training.</li> </ul>

**Priority #2: Maintain sufficient organizational capacity to operate an effective vocational rehabilitation program.**

Goals	Measures*
<b>Goal #1:</b> Increase the visibility and public understanding of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people who apply for DVR services.</li> <li>• Number of applicants determined eligible for DVR services.</li> <li>• DVR's application acceptance rate.</li> <li>• Number of community educational events sponsored or attended by DVR.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal #2:</b> Increase the amount of financial support received from the state of Colorado for the DVR program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of state general fund dollars allocated to DVR</li> </ul>
<b>Goal #3:</b> Improve DVR's ability to maintain a full and competent staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratio of filled to vacant full time FTE's.</li> <li>• Average amount of time it takes to fill a vacant DVR position.</li> <li>• Percentage of all staff departures that are due to reasons other than retirement.</li> <li>• Average supervisory rating on the CDHS Supervisory Feedback Survey</li> <li>• Number of training opportunities made available to staff.</li> <li>• Number of training attendances by DVR staff.</li> </ul>

\* DVR's goal is to increase performance over the previous year on those measures for which prior year data is available.

**ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c)(2)(a)**

Order of Selection

**FY 2006**





## Order of Selection

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) implemented an Order of Selection on March 1, 1993 due to the lack of sufficient funds to provide vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible persons. This action resulted from increased costs for vocational rehabilitation services, increased demand for services, an increased number of applicants with significant disabilities, and an inability of Colorado DVR to match all available Federal funds. However, DVR was able to serve all eligible individuals from SFY 1994 – SFY 2003. During the State budgetary process for SFY 2004, the DVR general fund state tax dollar budget was reduced by 25% which, when matched with federal funds, resulted in a reduction of approximately \$5,000,000 to DVR's total budget. As a result, DVR has been serving only the highest two priority categories under the Order of Selection since May 21, 2003. Although DVR does not expect any further reductions, resources will not increase for 2006. In addition, due to permanent loss of FTE over the last 3 years, it may take several years for DVR to increase VR counselor staffing to the level that is needed to serve all eligible individuals. Thus, DVR believes that all eligible persons who do not have a significant or most significant disability will continue to be placed on a waiting list for all of 2006.

In accordance with Section 101(a)(5)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, DVR has designated that individuals with disabilities will receive vocational rehabilitation services in the following order of priority:

FIRST : Eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities

SECOND: Eligible individuals with significant disabilities

THIRD: Eligible individuals with least significant disabilities

All eligible individuals with disabilities whose priority category is closed after initiation of services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) shall continue to receive services. All services, including post-employment services, shall be available to eligible individuals receiving services under an order of selection. All applicants, including those receiving trial work experiences, shall receive any and all services necessary to determine eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services and order of selection priority classification without regard to the availability of funds or the implementation of the order of selection. Such services shall be provided on a timely basis in accordance with the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and the regulations found at 34 CFR Part 361.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has developed the following criteria to identify an individual with the most significant disability:

- The individual must have an impairment or impairments which, alone or in combination, are severe,
- The individual must be seriously limited from achieving an employment outcome due to serious functional loss in **three or more** of the functional capacities identified in Section 7(15)(A) of Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-112) as amended through 1998 (Public Law 102-569),
- The individual must need at least two **core vocational rehabilitation services\*** to address the functional losses imposed by the significant impairment(s) in order to attain an employment outcome, and
- It will take a minimum of **five (5) months** to complete the services.

\* **Core vocational rehabilitation services** includes all vocational rehabilitation services other than supportive services (maintenance, transportation, services to family members, and personal assistance services); services secondary to core vocational rehabilitation services, such as training materials and supplies when training is being provided as a core vocational rehabilitation service; or, generalized counseling, guidance, and placement which are provided during the vocational rehabilitation process in connection with the provision of vocational rehabilitation services but are not identified as a needed vocational rehabilitation service on the IPE.

**SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS AND TIME FRAMES FOR ACHIEVING THEM  
July 1, 2005 - June 30, 2006**

	Eligibility Decisions	New Plans	26 Closures	Active Eligible Records
Individuals with most significant disabilities	3,078	1,492	654	7,102
Individuals with significant disabilities	3,555	1,603	777	6,822
Individuals with least significant disabilities	26*	33	225	551
TOTALS	6,659	3,128	1,660	14,475

\* DVR has been operating under an Order of Selection wait list for individuals with least significant disabilities since 2003. DVR has witnessed a significant decrease in the number of individuals with least significant disabilities who apply for services, as our partner agencies have stopped referring these individuals to our agency while a wait list is in effect.

**ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c)(3)**

Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds

**FY 2006**



## **Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) will continue to earmark available grant funds obtained under Title VI, Part B (Supported Employment Services), towards the administration of the supported employment program and the purchase of services in accordance with the 1998 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. No more than 5% of supported employment grant funds will be used for administrative activities, including, but not limited to, data collection and analyses, training, and consultation costs. At least 95% of grant funds under Title VI, Part B will be used to purchase supported employment services under Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) for individuals with the most significant disabilities who have been determined eligible for supported employment. (The types of services to be purchased remain the same as those identified in Attachment 4.9(c)(4) of the State plan for FY 2001.)

During FY 2004, 786 individuals with the most significant disabilities received supported employment services paid for, in part, with Title VI, Part B funds. An additional 577 received supported employment services under Title I (Vocational Rehabilitation Services), through direct case service authorization and under cooperative agreements. The total number of persons receiving supported employment services (1363) remained stable from fiscal year 2003 (1352). DVR's administrative priority is to assure the provision of supported employment services to all who need it, and it does not guide counselors to be concerned about whether they are funded through Title I or Title VI-B. This means that frequently individuals are served using a combination of the two funding sources.

To successfully meet the supported employment needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, DVR has continued the collaborative efforts and working relationships between local DVR offices and mental health centers, and between local DVR offices and agencies serving consumers with developmental disabilities. DVR counselors and vocational staff from the above agencies work together to identify individuals who would be appropriate referrals to DVR for supported employment services. During the past year these efforts as well as improved staffing patterns on the part of these agencies have helped to increase the number of individuals who began receiving supported employment services from DVR during the year as compared to the prior year. There have also been indications that part of this increase is due to these agencies improving their ability to handle the funding of extended support services and thus be in a better position to provide necessary placement and job coaching services for new DVR consumers.

DVR continues to work actively within the realm of Education, including Colorado's School to Career and Transition activities, and within the realm of WIA, to assure that youth with the most significant disabilities are accessing career, transition and employment services, including supported employment services, along with all Colorado youth. DVR has worked to infuse best practices within these areas, so that the needs of youth with the most significant disabilities are considered and met. Colorado DVR and Department of Education state-level staff work and travel as a team throughout the state, to respond to requests and to provide training, technical assistance and facilitation to local community agencies, such as schools and adult organizations, as these entities struggle to provide collaborative transition services to youth with the most significant disabilities.

In FY 2004 and 2005, DVR participated on the State Youth Council and on all eighteen local Youth Councils, to help assure that the needs of youth with disabilities, including those youth with the most significant disabilities, are considered in the planning and implementation of community youth programs and activities. The mission of Colorado's State Youth Council is "to create a pathway of economic success for Colorado's youth through the influence of policy and

practice.” Through DVR’s involvement at the state and local levels, Colorado Youth Councils are doing a better job of identifying barriers and gaps to linking youth with the most significant disabilities to services, and of creating linkages and opportunities for these youth that lead to successful employment, including supported employment.

Typically, DVR uses 100% of its Title VI-B funds for the direct authorization of supported employment services. Title I funds are also used for supported employment services provided under cooperative agreements as well as for individual supported employment programs. As identified above, DVR's policy is to assure the provision of supported employment services to all who need it and DVR places no value on using Title VI-B funds as opposed to Title I. Thus, it is impossible for DVR to separate its programmatic supported employment plans and goals into separate components for each funding source. Rather, DVR develops programming strategies for its entire supported employment program, which includes the use of Title VI-B and Title I funds.

The Division's programmatic activities for supported employment services and programs funded under both Titles I and VI-B are intended to increase the number of persons receiving supported employment services and to improve employment outcomes for these individuals. The Division believes that the most effective and efficient strategy to accomplish this is by expanding and strengthening its collaborative linkages with relevant State agencies and/or private not-for-profit agencies for the provision of supported employment and extended support services. Most of the following activities to be conducted during 2006 reflect a continuation and refinement of activities performed over the last several years. Although several of the planned activities reflect efforts to expand the capacity for extended services in the community, neither Title I or IV-B funds will be used to pay for extended ongoing support services.

#### Planned Activities

- DVR will continue to support and actively work with the Center for Technical Assistance and Training to identify and provide technical assistance to vocational rehabilitation field staff and other service providers.
- DVR will continue to be represented on all Local Youth Councils to help develop strategies, including supported employment services, to meet the unmet needs of to youth with the most significant disabilities.
- DVR is represented on each of Colorado’s eighteen Workforce Investment Boards and is able, through this forum, to assure that the needs of persons with the most significant disabilities are considered and planned for as Colorado’s local communities develop WIA programs, such as Workforce Centers, and policy to employ unemployed and underemployed Coloradoans. DVR will continue to be actively involved with WIA related activities and with the development and implementation of these activates statewide. Through membership on every Workforce Investment Board and Youth Council within the state, DVR will continue to provide technical assistance, training and resources in support of enhancing services to persons with the most significant disabilities, via the WIA system.

**ATTACHMENT 4.12 (d)**

State's Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

**FY 2006**





**ATTACHMENT 4.12 (d)(1)**

To Address Needs Identified in the Comprehensive Assessment and to Achieve Identified Goals  
and Priorities

**FY 2006**



## **To Address Needs in the Comprehensive Assessment and to Achieve Identified Goals and Priorities**

As identified in section 4.12(c)(1), DVR has developed two core priorities and a number of goals that support each. Based on feedback received through the comprehensive assessment, public hearings, advisory councils, and other less formal venues regarding the needs of Colorado residents with disabilities, DVR has developed a number of strategies to address each goal. While some of these strategies are new for DVR, many are continuations and refinements of strategies initiated over the past five years.

### **Priority #1: Increase the number of quality of employment outcomes**

**Goal #1: *Improve the effectiveness of DVR's service delivery process for all individuals.***

**Strategy #1: Reduce the amount of time spent on documentation of the VR process.** As described in attachment 4.12(e), DVR developed and implemented a totally revised documentation process on July 1, 2003, which was subsequently refined through the creation of a new and simpler set of forms that were implemented on March 1, 2005. These new forms reduce the amount of documentation required of counselors, yet they maintain the structured decision-making process that was encouraged by the former set of forms. In FY 2006, DVR will ensure that these new forms are provided to all counselors in easy-to-use, electronic formats, and will begin to evaluate the effectiveness of the new forms through its quality assurance case review process. In addition, a contract has been developed with a new vendor to complete DVR's automated case management system, RISE. This is the effort that will produce the greatest amount of relief to counselors in managing and completing necessary casework documentation accurately and efficiently. This project will be rolled out in phases, with a vendor database and resource management in the field by the end of FY 2006, followed by case management, accounting, budgeting, and federal reporting during FY 2007.

**Strategy #2: Enforce the quality assurance feedback loop.** In January 2005, a revised quality assurance process was implemented, which will be utilized throughout FY 2006 and beyond. This new process places a great deal of effort and importance into ensuring that quality assurance findings and results are communicated in a timely manner and in appropriate levels of detail to counselors, supervisors, and decision makers in the Field Services unit of DVR. Following each quarterly quality assurance case review, state- and region-wide results are presented, and a facilitated discussion takes place to identify the policies, procedures, or any other factors that may be impacting the numbers either positively or negatively. In addition, the new review process incorporates a system of data collection that will allow for quality assurance questions to be correlated with vocational rehabilitation outcomes, which will help DVR to focus its improvement strategies around case management behaviors that truly make a difference to an individual's success.

**Strategy #3: Examine the feasibility of fee changes.** DVR understands that its relatively low fees for certain services have limited the availability of vendors willing to work with us – particularly in rural areas of the state. In all likelihood, the limited choice in vendors and high wait lists for critical services have contributed to our inability to meet our production goals in recent years. DVR has determined that it is feasible to raise the fees that it pays for some services, particularly in those areas where it has been more difficult to attract high quality

vendors. DVR is currently conducting an analysis to determine which fees are most critical to increase and how much of an increase is feasible.

**Strategy #4: Improve the accessibility of DVR for all individuals.** DVR is committed to the ongoing evaluation of the accessibility of services in the more remote areas of Colorado. Based on currently identified needs, DVR plans to staff counselors in Steamboat Springs, Craig, Greeley, and Aurora during FY 2006, in addition to existing offices throughout the state. DVR is currently in the process of developing a new and improved website, an effort which will continue into FY 2006. In addition to allowing for online application and email access to all offices, the improved website will be compliant with Section 508 standards, making it fully accessible to persons with disabilities. Web pages will also include a button that once selected will translate the page into Spanish, as well as a number of other languages. These features will appeal to a broader audience of Colorado citizens who are seeking information about DVR and its services. DVR is also in the process of obtaining a toll-free number that can be used by anyone needing to reach offices that are not in their local calling area.

**Strategy #5: Enhance the utility of the DVR data provided to the field on a regular basis.** DVR field supervisors receive data reports from the administrative office at monthly intervals throughout the year. The purpose of these reports is to assist supervisors in managing their productivity and quality to meet their annual goals. During FY 2006, DVR plans to work with field supervisors to examine the data reports that are provided to them and identify revisions in content or format that will enhance their utility for continuous improvement activities.

**Strategy #6: Strengthen training efforts.** During FY 2005, DVR moved its training unit under the supervision of the Administrator of Field Services and transferred another full-time FTE to the unit, which was filled on March 1<sup>st</sup>.to assist with training. The agency's director has established a number of training priorities for FY 2006, all aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the service delivery process. Topics include: effective service provision to persons with mental illness, informed choice, understanding and maintaining good casework practices, problem-solving strategies for reducing the number of unsuccessful closures, and more effective and efficient job development and placement.

**Strategy #7: Outreach to rural areas with regard to teaching services for the blind.** The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation offers training programs to help people who are blind or visually impaired become independent at home, in the community and in employment. Depending on the individual's needs, training may be provided through the center-based Personal Adjustment Training Program or the field-based Rehabilitation Teaching/Orientation and Mobility Program, where instructional services are provided at the individual's home, on the job site, and /or in other community settings. Currently, these programs are based out of Denver, often times requiring travel on the part of the trainee. During FY 2006, DVR will be piloting a one-week, intensive immersion program that will allow DVR to expand teaching services to territory on the Eastern Plains of Colorado.

***Goal #2: Improve the effectiveness of DVR's service delivery process for individuals who are deaf and for individuals who have mental health needs.***

**Strategy #1: Strengthen partnerships with mental health providers in Colorado.** DVR believes that it must find cooperative ways to overcome the barriers associated with service effectiveness to individuals with mental health needs. DVR plans to continue building

relationships with its partners inside and outside of the Department of Human Services during FY 2006 to keep the lines of communication open with regard to improving services for these individuals. One of the ways we have done this is by converting our fund 7 agreement to an RFP process. This will mean that mental health centers that participate will be paid an agreed annual amount as opposed to drawing down funds on a per case basis, making it easier and more desirable for mental health centers to do business with DVR. The start date for these contracts is set for July 1, 2005. DVR hopes that this will re-engage some of the providers who we have lost over the years. Once these new centers come on board, DVR will work with their staff to ensure that they are fully informed about DVR's role with regard to mental health.

The Mental Health Vocational Consortium has been meeting for the last 10 years or so, on a quarterly basis and DVR will continue to participate in this group and co-chair the meetings. Attendees include the Vocational Coordinators from public mental health center programs around the state, DVR counselors who work with them to pay for vocational services, representatives from the Division of Mental Health, and representatives from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The purpose is to facilitate ongoing communication between DVR and the mental health centers and to build greater understanding between the two systems.

**Strategy #2: Study the statewide service delivery system for mental health and develop recommendations for actions DVR can take to improve it.** DVR is committed, in FY 2006, to conducting a comprehensive review of the services available within and outside of the department of human services for individuals with mental health needs. Based on the assessment, recommendations will be made for actions that DVR can take to begin to close the service gap for the mental health population. This study will include, but will not be limited to, the following components:

- A nationwide review of successful mental health programs to identify potential benchmarks for Colorado.
- An investigation into resources that DVR can access to ensure that eligible individuals are properly medicated so that they can participate fully and make informed choices during the development of their individualized plan for employment.
- Exploration of alternative resources that individuals can access for ongoing needs for medication or therapeutic services after their case is closed with DVR.

**Strategy #3: Conduct a formal evaluation of the DVR services provided to individuals who are deaf, and make recommendations for improvement.** DVR plans to conduct a formal evaluation of the services it provides to individuals who are deaf. Amongst other things, this evaluation will study the quality of employment outcomes for deaf individuals versus non-deaf individuals, the length of time it takes to achieve these outcomes for each population, the sufficiency of the interpreting services available, and the prevalence of counselors fluent in American Sign Language versus the need in various areas of the state. Recommendations will be made for process changes that may lead to greater levels of effectiveness.

**Strategy #4: Increase the availability of assistive technology for communication with individuals who are deaf.** DVR has begun to access video-relay services in an effort to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its deaf consumers. During FY 2006, DVR plans to examine this and other types of assistive technology available for the deaf population (i.e., instant messaging) and make better use of it across the agency.

**Strategy #5: Examine the feasibility of fee changes.** As mentioned above with regard to improving the overall effectiveness of the service delivery process, DVR is currently conducting

an analysis to determine which fees are most critical to increase and where there is room for a fee decrease to offset the increases. Fees paid for interpreting services for individuals who are deaf and fees for medical assessments and services for individuals with mental illness will both be examined as part of an effort to attract more providers of quality services in these critical areas.

**Strategy #6: Increase training efforts around service delivery for individuals with mental illness.** As mentioned above, effective service delivery to persons with mental illness is a priority training topic for FY 2006.

**Strategy #7: Work with a vendor to develop a peer mentoring program.** During FY 2005, a peer mentoring program was piloted in the Denver Metro vocational rehabilitation office. This program, which is facilitated by the chair of the State Rehabilitation Council, is intended to augment the services of counselors and provide some extra support and attention to clients in need of that. The goal of the program is to connect 20 customers of DVR who are successfully reaching (or have successfully reached) their own employment goals with customers who are new to the process or are struggling to use the process beneficially. The mentoring program, in part, is an extended communication apparatus for persons who, for whatever reasons, are having trouble utilizing the DVR process as a tool. It is important that DVR help the consumer to understand the importance of his or her individual contribution to the process, and relay that his or her employment goals can be realized given commitment and diligence. The mentoring program is an excellent beginning toward achieving a consumer's ultimate success in entering the job market. While it is known that DVR administrators, staff, and counselors are doing the best they can to achieve this goal, exposing customers to the first-hand example of other customers who are having success in achieving their objectives will be a huge incentive to strive harder. DVR intends to build and refine the program during FY 2006.

**Strategy #8: Quality Assurance Reviews.** During FY 2006, DVR will use its quality assurance process to examine the extent to which Individualized Plans for Employment for individuals with mental health needs include appropriate mental health services, when necessary, and the extent to which the planned services are being provided.

**Goal #3: *Improve the quality of job placements for all individuals.***

**Strategy #1: Enhance the capacity to provide job placement services internally.** Although some counselors provide job development and job placement services directly to some of their individuals on their caseload, many do not have the time or resources to do so effectively. During FY 2006, DVR plans to start cultivating the skills and infrastructure across the organization such that it does not need to rely as heavily on external vendors for these services.

**Strategy #2: Build stronger community connections.** During FY 2006, DVR plans to pursue stronger relationships and connections with local employers, as well as other agencies conducting job development and job placement, in order to expand on the resources we currently have available for these services. For example (from field sups meeting), DVR would like to capitalize on its existing relationship with workforce centers to strengthen the center's employment marketing specialists' abilities to talk with employers specifically about individuals with disabilities and their important role in the workforce. DVR would also like to identify referral sources we have not already identified, including employers who already employ individuals with disabilities, and federal, state, and other public sector agencies.

**Strategy #3: Assess and, if necessary, modify the rates that DVR pays for job finding and job placement services.** DVR is in the process of conducting feasibility studies for modifying the fees that pays for job finding and job placement services. These studies will continue into FY 2006. Based on the results of these studies, DVR hopes to be able to increase fees paid for these services and, thus, increase the number of quality vendors willing to provide services for DVR. Although DVR is employing strategies aimed at increasing non-federal sources of revenue, its budget picture for the rest of 2005 and 2006 is unclear. Increasing fees in the areas of job development and job placement may require a reduction of fees paid in other areas.

**Goal #4: Increase the availability of consumer training intended to increase their skill in using assistive technology that allows them to more effectively participate in their rehabilitation program.**

**Strategy #1: Strengthen our partnership with the Colorado Assistive Technology Partners and Independent Living Centers.** During FY 2006, DVR would like to become more aware of, and involved with, the work being conducted by the Colorado Assistive Technology Partners. Specifically, DVR will outreach to this group to ask for assistance in educating DVR staff about the current projects that are underway and identify ways that DVR can become involved. In addition, DVR plans to make better use of the expertise and assistance available through the Independent Living Centers for areas of the state where they exist.

**Strategy #2: Provide training on assistive technology to counselors.** DVR believes that for effective training to be provided to consumers, counselors need to better understand the assistive technology that is available to consumers with different types of disabilities. DVR plans to identify training opportunities available for staff in FY 2006 and encourage staff to seek a higher level of knowledge in this area.

**Priority #2: Maintain sufficient organizational capacity to operate an effective vocational rehabilitation program.**

**Goal #1: Increase the visibility and public understanding of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.**

**Strategy #1: Educate legislators and other community members about DVR's benefit to Colorado.** During FY 2005, DVR partnered with the State Rehabilitation Council to begin an ongoing process of extensive education for members of Colorado's general assembly and the public about the contributions to Colorado's economy and infrastructure. DVR developed an assortment of charts and graphs that visually display increases in the tax base and taxes paid, reduced reliance on public assistance, and other benefits in each area of the state. In addition, open houses were held at strategic locations across the state where educators and the public were invited to come to our DVR offices and learn more about the services that DVR provides. These strategies will continue to be employed throughout FY 2006, in an effort to develop greater levels of public understanding about the program.



**Strategy #2: Publish an annual report following each fiscal year.** Prior to its budget shortfall, DVR published an annual report of its key accomplishments following each fiscal year. During the fall and winter of 2005, DVR revived the development of this process and distributed an annual report that summarizes its key accomplishments for state fiscal year 2005. This annual report will be prepared each year as a strategy for increasing public understanding, and will be distributed strategically to individuals that DVR targets for education.

**Strategy #3: Develop a new website with enhanced functionality and ensure it provides current and appropriate information.** During FY 2005, DVR began work on updating its website. The goal of this project, which is targeted for completion in early FY 2006, are to develop a user-friendly, accessible site for potential and current DVR consumers, employers, and providers that provides current, simple, and appropriate information. The new website will provide, amongst other things, information about DVR's application process, eligibility requirements, services available, office locations with email links to each one, DVR's forms, steps to employment, employment tools, and information about each of our specialty programs.

**Strategy #4: Enhance the quality of DVR's outreach strategy and materials.** During FY 2006, DVR plans to revise and enhance the quality of its overall strategy used for outreach, as well as the quality of the materials available to support the effort. Specifically, DVR will update its current display board; make a targeted effort to become involved in more community and media-sponsored events at local levels, develop a better approach to advertising DVR's services in directories such as the yellow pages; and revise the content and look of the many brochures being used across the agency into one consistent brochure. In addition, DVR is in the process of designing a logo that will be used on external communications in an effort to help DVR develop an identity.

**Goal #2: Increase the amount of financial support received from the State of Colorado for the DVR program.**

**Strategy #1: Educate legislators and the public about DVR's benefit to Colorado.** As mentioned above, DVR partnered with the State Rehabilitation Council during FY 2005 to begin an ongoing process of extensive education for members of Colorado's general assembly and the public about the contributions to Colorado's economy and infrastructure. DVR developed an assortment of charts and graphs that visually display increases in the tax base and taxes paid, reduced reliance on public assistance, and other benefits in each area of the state. In addition, open houses were held at strategic locations across the state where educators and the public were invited to come to our DVR offices and learn more about the services that DVR provides. These strategies will continue to be employed throughout FY 2006, in an effort to develop greater levels of public understanding about the *program*. *As part of this effort, DVR's administration will conduct ongoing coaching with the Supervisors and staff at each field office on how to interact appropriately and effectively with legislation officials.*

**Strategy #2: Internal education about DVR.** DVR feels that, in order for our education and outreach efforts to be effective outside of the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), it must make a concentrated effort to educate higher level managers and other groups within CDHS about the benefits of DVR. During FY 2006, DVR will identify forums where opportunities for education exist and can be utilized.

**Goal #3: Improve DVR's ability to maintain a full and competent staff.**

**Strategy #1: Conduct exit interviews.** During FY 2006, DVR's administrative office plans to conduct regular exit interviews with staff members who resign for reasons other than retirement, in an effort to better understand the reasons that people leave. The results of these exit interviews will be used as a management tool to help identify retention strategies.

**Strategy #2: Provide opportunities for advancement.** DVR's current practice is to hire internally when filling the majority of supervisory roles that become vacant. During FY 2006, DVR will continue to encourage and support staff members who aspire to supervisory or administrative roles to take advantage of the supervisory and leadership training programs sponsored by the Department of Personnel and the Department of Human Services. In addition, Leadership training is one of the top priorities for the Region VIII Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program, and DVR will take full advantage of the training that they produce.

**Strategy #3: Strengthen our partnership with the human resources unit within the Colorado Department of Human Resources.** During FY 2005, DVR began to develop a partnership with the human resources unit with the Colorado Department of Human Services. As a result, DVR was able to obtain waivers allowing us to hire individuals living outside the State of Colorado. DVR will maintain open lines of communication with the human resources unit to ensure that these waivers are renewed on an annual basis. In addition, DVR will continue to educate HR staff about the qualifications required by the federal government for rehabilitation counselors so that HR can implement selection tests and processes that result in the hiring of individuals who meet these qualifications.

**Strategy #4: Create a positive working environment where staff feel valued.** During FY 2005, DVR's administration conducted a number of focus groups throughout the state where staff were invited to attend and provide feedback about the current state of DVR and their ideas for improving the work environment. A number of suggestions were made and incorporated into a Field Services Action Plan. As a result of the completion of the action plan, DVR witnessed improved morale on the part of its staff. DVR plans to continue its efforts to elicit regular input and feedback from staff and to maintain a positive work environment during FY 2006 and beyond.

**ATTACHMENT 4.12 (d)(2)**

To Carry Out Outreach Activities to Identify and Serve Individuals with the Most Significant  
Disabilities Who are Minorities

**FY 2006**



**To Carry Out Outreach Activities to Identify and Serve Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities Who are Minorities**

The Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is committed to assuring the availability and effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services for diverse ethnic groups. As evidenced by the following table, our outreach to ethnic communities has been effective. For all ethnic and racial minority populations, except Asian Americans, DVR's percentage of applicants and persons successfully rehabilitated equals or exceeds the minority group's representation in Colorado's general population.

**Ethnic/Racial Distribution**  
Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Colorado's Population

Ethnic Group	DVR Applicants 2004	Successfully Rehabilitated 2004	Colorado Population
Caucasian	67.6%	72.5%	74.5%
Hispanic	19.2%	18.2%	17.1%
African American	8.7%	6.4%	3.7%
Native American	2.8%	1.4%	.7%
Asian	1.6%	1.6%	2.3%
	100%	100%	100%

Source: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation applications taken and persons successfully rehabilitated between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004 and, 2000 State census data.

Although the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is serving diverse ethnic groups in close proportion to their incidence in the general population, DVR continually strives to further identify and increase outreach to ethnic groups, including those with the most significant disabilities, and to improve the quality and effectiveness of service provision. However, rather than develop special programs and processes which focus exclusively on individuals from minority backgrounds who have most significant disabilities, DVR implements strategies to increase outreach and service effectiveness to all individuals within an ethnic group, regardless of significance of disability. DVR believes that this approach assures outreach to persons with most significant disabilities from minority groups without de-emphasizing outreach to all persons with disabilities from minority groups.

DVR continues to believe that one of the most effective strategies to assure adequate outreach and service provision to individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities from diverse ethnic groups, is to employ staff from ethnic groups and/or staff who can communicate with individuals in their native languages, when necessary. This is even more important for individuals with most significant disabilities whose vocational rehabilitation typically requires more intensive interactions with counselors. In order to assure that staffing is appropriate to meet special communication needs of individuals with disabilities, including those with most significant disabilities from ethnic backgrounds, staffing patterns and consumer populations are routinely reviewed to ensure that personnel who are bilingual and/or who are of ethnic backgrounds are available to communicate with consumers.

Recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel, including those from ethnic backgrounds, are on-going activities. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation recruits counselor interns from university programs where internships are a requirement for graduation. Selection of interns from diverse ethnic groups, when available, is a priority. Recruitment announcements for staff vacancies are shared with community agencies and organizations that provide services to ethnic groups as well as with the Rehabilitation Counseling Program and RRCEP at the University of Northern Colorado, and other institutions of higher education. Further efforts to solicit applications from individuals from ethnic backgrounds include job announcements that are posted on the Internet.

The largest ethnic minority group in Colorado consists of individuals who are Hispanic or Latino; in fact, this population now makes up over 19.2% of DVR's applicants annually. Therefore, it is critical for DVR to assure adequate service delivery staff members are available that can speak Spanish. At the present time, approximately 50% of the district offices have at least one staff member who speaks fluent Spanish. All offices have no- or low-cost translating resources readily available to assist with communication when necessary. In recent years DVR has upgraded the telephone system within field offices to include multiline capability. This technology enables staff members to connect up to two outside lines together permitting three-way calling. DVR is developing a list of offices with staff members who are English/Spanish bilingual so that offices lacking a staff member who speaks Spanish, but receives a telephone call from a monolingual Spanish speaking individual will be able to connect to an office with a bilingual staff member who will serve as an interpreter. This will eliminate the need for monolingual Spanish speaking individuals to have to call back or wait for a bilingual staff member to call them back.

For the past ten years DVR has operated a Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Program designed to meet the needs of this hard to reach population. An effective strategy of outreach to this population has been to contract with Rocky Mountain SER for bilingual/bicultural staff members who outreach specifically to Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers with disabilities. In addition, during the planting and harvesting season, DVR staff members, working along side the Rocky Mountain SER outreach workers and contracted rehabilitation counselor aides make themselves available to meet with migrants during those times when they are not working the fields, which includes evenings and weekends. Outreach has been effective through networking and collaboration with the various agencies and individuals serving and/or advocating for the migratory population. This project is now well known in Colorado's four major agricultural areas and migrant workers, including those with the most significant disabilities, are becoming more aware of various agencies providing services in their local areas.

The Migratory and Seasonal Farm worker Project has continued to host training conferences for individuals who are involved in serving or advocating for the needs of the migratory and seasonal farm worker. The purpose of these conferences is to enhance the understanding of social, economic, educational, and rehabilitation needs of this population. The topics covered are tailored to the specific needs of that given area, which will include presentations and discussion on issues such as health, education, employment and training, immigration, welfare reform and the cultural characteristics of the Hispano as well as the Cora and Kickapoo Indian populations. The development of these conferences involves active collaboration among various agencies throughout the State, including Region VIII CRP RRCEP, Center For Technical Assistance and Training, State and local Colorado Migrant and Rural Coalition groups, Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and other interested individuals. This effort helps local agencies understand the needs of this population and helps collaborative

activities to market services to migratory and seasonal farm workers, including those with the most significant disabilities.

From a statistical perspective DVR believes we have demonstrated that our current outreach efforts are adequately addressing the needs of ethnic and racial minority groups with the most significant disabilities. Despite this, DVR is committed to being attentive and active in identifying cooperative and collaborative relationships that will facilitate the awareness of DVR service delivery options to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are minorities.

**ATTACHMENT 4.12 (d)(3)**

To Overcome Identified Barriers Relating to Equitable Access to and Participation of Individuals with Disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.

**FY 2006**





## **To Overcome Identified Barriers Relating to Equitable Access to and Participation of Individuals with Disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.**

Comparison of DVR's caseload data to Colorado's population characteristics as well as analysis within disability groups does not suggest that equitable access to the vocational rehabilitation services or the supported employment services programs is a problem in Colorado. However, it is an important issue and can always be improved upon. Pursuant to this, DVR has established the following specific goals and strategies concerning access to our programs.

### **Barrier #1**

DVR would like to expand the availability and ease of access for consumers to information about the existence of the agency, its purpose, eligibility, services, and locations of DVR offices.

### **Strategy**

1. During FY 2005, DVR began work on updating its website. The goal of this project, which is targeted for completion in early FY 2006, are to develop a user-friendly, accessible site for potential and current DVR consumers, employers, and providers that provides current, simple, and appropriate information. The new website will provide, amongst other things, information about DVR's application process, eligibility requirements, services available, office locations with email links to each one, DVR's forms, steps to employment, employment tools, and information about each of our specialty programs. The improved website will be compliant with Section 508 standards, making it fully accessible to persons with disabilities. DVR will include the web-site address for DVR on printed brochures and other publications.
2. DVR will expand annual training regarding DVR to local school districts, BOCES, independent living centers, advocate organizations, other state and county agencies, and community service organizations. DVR will provide training to some of these entities. DVR maintains numerous desk aids for use by school personnel to increase their awareness of collaborative DVR services and to provide office contact information.
3. DVR will continue to take part in local community events where various service providers and public agencies provide information concerning their programs and services to the general public. DVR will use this forum to "get the word out" about the DVR program to individuals that may not necessarily be considering a public agency, as a means to obtain necessary services. DVR will continue to host Community Education Events to educate legislators and the public.
4. Individualized Performance Objectives on staff performance plans emphasize outreach efforts, particularly to those populations who are less likely to come to DVR on their own.
5. DVR will display posters in offices, which identify and describe DVR services.
6. DVR will update its listing with the 211 system.

## **Barrier #2**

The availability of adequate and accessible public transportation especially in rural areas, and in the Denver-metropolitan area, continues to be a problem for those persons served by DVR related to their ability to get to local DVR offices, to get to service locations, and to travel to places of employment.

### **Strategy**

1. In order to actively advocate for the needs of persons with disabilities related to transportation issues, staff of DVR will participate on the Alternative Transportation Committee. This committee provides input to the Regional Transportation District (RTD) related to Access-A-Ride services for persons with disabilities, in the Denver metropolitan area, as well as to companies that provide alternative transportation. Division staff will continue to provide input and education about the need for improved transportation options for DVR consumers.
2. An Orientation and Mobility Specialist for the blind will serve on the RTD Advisory Board. To address the needs of passengers who have disabilities, and help provide disability awareness training for drivers.
3. Counselors and supervisors will continue to make special efforts to identify employers, in rural areas who have developed specialized transportation services for their employees, and develop employment opportunities for DVR consumers with these employers.
4. DVR staff will help to raise public awareness of the need for adequate and accessible public transportation in rural areas for all citizens, including individuals with disabilities, to enable them to have wider options of where and when they can work. Rehabilitation Teachers for the Blind based in Denver will outreach to rural communities to work with consumers, and can provide consultation on travel accommodations and adaptive skills to enhance their ability to travel.

## **Barrier #3**

Need to assure on a statewide basis, the availability and use of assistive technology services and devices, as appropriate, at each stage of the rehabilitation process.

### **Strategy**

1. DVR is committed to expanding the availability of assistive technology services and resources for all individuals with disabilities in all areas of the state, regardless of the point during the vocational rehabilitation process at which they become needed. Please see Attachment 4.12 (d)(1) for DVR strategies related to the provision of assistive technology services.
2. The Adaptive Technology Specialist, based at the Denver Metro Office will travel to outlying DVR offices to provide consultation to counselors and staff regarding assistive technology services and devices.

3. DVR staff will continue to collaborate with community-based organizations to explore the development of local Assistive Technology Centers, which can provide assessment services and demonstrate devices and equipment.

**ATTACHMENT 4.12 (e)**

Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I  
Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

**FY 2006**



## **Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) conducts an annual assessment of the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program. This information is used by DVR as a benchmark to review progress made year to year as related to internal standards and indicators, which DVR has developed. Management staff uses this information to identify areas needing improvement as well as positive achievements, and to develop agency strategies and build on best practices.

### **The following are some highlights for FY 2004:**

- New applications = 6,753 (a 21% decrease from 2003)
- Eligibility decisions = 4,249 (a 37% decrease from 2003)
- Average length of time to determine eligibility = 65 days
- % of applications determined eligible within 60 days = 54% (SFY 03 =63%)
- IPEs written = 2,665 (36% decrease from 2003)
- Colorado DVR's standard for time between eligibility decision and completion of the rehabilitation plan is 120 days or less. For FY 2004, 40.76% of all rehabilitation plans were completed in 120 days or less from the time of the eligibility decision.
- Total caseload (excluding 00 to 08 closures) = 18,664 (a 3.6% decrease from FY 2003)
- Eligible individuals served = 14,372

### **Number of individuals whose cases were successfully closed status '26' in FY 2004 = 1,638 (a decrease of 17.1% from FY 2003).**

- 91.3% of persons whose cases were successfully closed (1,496) worked in competitive employment earning a wage. 95.9% of them (1,454) earned at least minimum wage. (93.9% in FY 2003).
- The average hourly wage of successfully employed persons earning at least minimum wage was \$10.08 per hour. This is 53.8% of the average hourly wage (\$18.72) for workers in Colorado for FY 2004.
- For persons successfully employed, 283 reported "self" as the primary source of support at application and 1,137 reported "self" as primary source of support at closure. This represents a 301% increase.
- Earnings for persons working for wage, salary or self-employment increased from an average of \$68.89 per week at the time of application to an average of \$299.42 per week at closure. This represents a 335% increase.
- Average hourly earnings for all successfully employed individuals were \$2.21 per hour at the time of application and \$9.21 per hour at the time of closure. This represents a 317% increase.
- Average number of working hours for all successfully employed individuals was 6.82 hours per week at the time of application and 28.72 hours per week at the time of closure. This represents a 321% increase.
- 15.9% of successfully employed persons worked in occupations categorized as Professional/Technical/Management at the time of case closure.

Primary Source of Support and % Change Between Application and Closure:

<u>Primary Source of Support</u>	<u>% Change Between Application and Closure</u>
Current Earnings	+301.8%
Family and Friends	-75.4%
Public Assistance	-41.0%
SSDI Benefits	-21.9%

Minority Access to Services:

	<u>Applicants</u>	<u>Rehabilitated</u>	<u>2000 Colorado Census</u>
African-American	9.2%	6.5%	3.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.7%	1.6%	2.3%
Hispanic American	20.1%	18.4%	17.1%
Native American	3.0%	1.4%	1.0%
White/Other	70.7%	73.6%	74.5%

Age of Applicants and of Persons Successfully Rehabilitated:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Applicants</u>	<u>Rehabilitated</u>
13-21	20.9%	22.8%
22-30	14.7%	16.5%
31-40	19.8%	17.3%
41-50	24.8%	23.0%
51-60	15.4%	13.3%
61-64	2.2%	1.6%
65+	2.3%	5.4%

Severity of Disability:

- 74.2% of individuals served had significant or most significant disabilities (a 5% decrease from SFY 2003)
- 99.7% of individuals determined eligible had significant or most significant disabilities (a 13.2% increase from SFY 2003)
- 82.3% of individuals successfully rehabilitated had significant or most significant disabilities (a 16.3% increase from SFY 2003).

Annual Expenditures:

Total expenditures for purchase of services = \$16,317,101 (a 9.2% increase from SFY 2003)



## **Progress in Achieving Goals and Priorities for FY 2004**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) continually reviews and develops strategies and actions as part of its strategic planning process. DVR's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) assisted DVR in establishing its goals and priorities for FY 2005.

As of March 2005, the following progress has been achieved:

### **Priority #1: Improve the percentage of successful employment outcomes**

In federal fiscal year 2004, 55.2% of the post-IPE closures reflected successful employment outcomes. This actually reflects a decrease from federal fiscal year 2003, where 58.1% of the post-IPE closures were successful, and is slightly below RSA's required level of performance. Over the last three years, Colorado DVR has experienced a reduction in State appropriated funds of over \$1.7 million, which resulted in a total reduction of over \$8 million in state/federal funds. In addition to the State fund reductions, twenty-four full-time positions were also cut from DVR's program. This resulted in a consolidation of offices, holding positions vacant (including many counseling positions), and reducing case service expenditures via an OOS waiting list for persons who do not have significant disabilities. The combination of these activities negatively impacted DVR's ability to meet its production goals for federal fiscal year 2004. During state fiscal year 2005, DVR began to fill many of its vacant positions and implemented a number of goals and strategies aimed at improving its percentage of successful employment outcomes. As a result, DVR is beginning to see an increase in effectiveness. Over 68% of the post-IPE closures between October 1, 2004 and February 1, 2005 have been successful, and DVR expects that its performance on federal standards and indicators related to production will show significant improvement at the end of federal fiscal year 2005.

The following is a summary of the progress made through March of 2005 toward each of the goals associated with priority one.

#### **Goal #1:**

*Improve the effectiveness of counseling and guidance provided during the preliminary assessment and the IPE planning process to assure the commitment of all applicants and eligible individuals to go to work.*

**Implementation of a New Tool:** The "Justification for Training Form" that was developed and made available to counselors in FY 2004 as an optional tool was used more consistently throughout FY 2005. The intent of this form was to provide some structure to help counselors and consumers jointly assess employment goals that required the individual to enter a formal training program. Feedback from counselors who used the tool as part of their counseling and guidance sessions during FY 2005 confirms that the tool has been helpful in the following ways:

- It leads to more in-depth dialogue regarding the consumer's choice of employment goal
- It helps assess the suitability of college and/or other formal training, based on the individual's motivation and readiness to enter a program
- It helps to confirm that the individual clearly understands what he or she wants to achieve through the planned training program and is committed to the employment outcome.

**Revised Documentation Process:** DVR developed and implemented a totally revised documentation process on July 1, 2003. The purpose of this initiative was to incorporate a problem-solving approach to documentation to assure that VR counselors gather and adequately analyze data needed for quality decision-making. Making this transition was difficult for some DVR staff, but DVR management believed that incorporating all steps of the VR process into its documentation process was pivotal to improving the effectiveness of its service delivery process.

After the use of this new process for the last eighteen months, DVR believes that performance in critical areas has improved, primarily as a result of the increased emphasis on activities required for a comprehensive analysis of applicable data and quality decision-making. This is particularly evident in the accuracy of eligibility determinations over the past 18 months – 100% accuracy in DVR’s last two federal case reviews and in all of its quality assurance reviews. Additionally, on average, 97% of the cases reviewed contained sufficient documentation to support the eligibility determination, and counselor analysis of vocational impediments was identified as a weakness in less than 15% of the cases. Although DVR expects to see continued improvement in counselor analysis of the vocational impediments, this represents considerable improvement over the last year.

DVR has also seen some improvements in the IPE planning process, although they are not as dramatic as those seen for eligibility determinations. Quality assurance data indicates that the employment goal was suitable in all but one case reviewed, but that 22% of these service records did not document informed choice in accordance with DVR’s guidelines. DVR would also like to see further improvement in the identification of VR needs, particularly in analyzing and identifying all employment barriers.

DVR continues to emphasize the importance of the preliminary assessment and IPE planning process, as it relates to ensuring the individual’s commitment to go to work. DVR has refined its new documentation process to simplify the amount of paperwork necessary to conduct these activities efficiently and effectively (see progress on priority two, goal 2). DVR believes that these changes will begin to produce improved performance on its federal standards and indicators related to number of employment outcomes by the end of federal fiscal year 2005.

**Use of Mentoring Counselors:** During FY 2005, DVR strengthened its “Mentoring Counselor” program. With the high turnover that DVR has been experiencing due to retirements and the recent filling of vacancies, mentoring counselor positions were set up as a way to ensure that newer counselors have someone to consult with as they learn to work within DVR’s structured vocational rehabilitation process, and to provide coaching for newer counselors on effective counseling and guidance techniques. During FY 2005, the role of mentoring counselors was expanded to include the responsibility for assisting in the conduct of quality assurance case reviews. They were provided detailed training regarding what to look for in a case review. This knowledge will not only help them to conduct the case reviews, but it provides a foundation for their mentoring with other counselors.

**Goal #2:**

*Improve the IPE planning process so that service provision is more effective in assisting individuals to obtain employment outcomes.*

**Revised Documentation Process:** The key strategy employed in FY 2005 to achieve this goal was the honing of the new documentation process, particularly as it relates to the IPE planning process. Although the changes are just now becoming visible in the form of statistics, as indicated above, DVR believes that the new process has created a culture of more effective dialogue between counselors and consumers during the comprehensive assessment phase of the vocational rehabilitation process, prior to the selection of an employment goal. The forms used to document this dialogue underwent revisions during FY 2005 (see Priority 2, Goal 2), but the structured process of decision-making inspired by the forms has been preserved. DVR will continue to assess the effectiveness of service provision by analyzing its performance on federal standards and indicators related to employment outcomes.

**Expansion of the Supervisor's Role in Coaching and Mentoring:** While this strategy was not limited to correcting problems with or improving the IPE planning process, problems in that area were certainly addressed by it. This strategy was implemented in three ways:

- ***Quality assurance follow-up.*** The quality assurance process used internally in DVR was modified in FY 2005 to require documented coaching and mentoring sessions between the supervisor and counselor. Individual issues that are identified during the quality assurance case review and require follow-up are forwarded to the appropriate supervisor. That supervisor is responsible for identifying, in writing, the actions that have been taken, or that will be taken to correct the deficiency.
- ***Mentoring Positions.*** As mentioned above, DVR strengthened its "Mentoring Counselor Program" during FY 2005. Supervisors are responsible not only for formally coaching and mentoring the counselors they supervise, but also for ensuring that their mentoring counselors have the resources they need to coach and mentor the other counselors in the office.
- ***Frequent Supervisory Reviews:*** During FY 2005, counselors were required to submit cases that met certain criteria (i.e., when the goal is self-employment, when the IPE is expected to take longer than two years to complete, when the consumer is planning to attend an out-of-state program, when expenditures are expected to exceed \$2000, etc.) to their supervisors for review prior to the implementation of the individualized plan for employment. In addition to ensuring that limited dollars were spent appropriately, this review process provided additional opportunities for supervisors to observe casework and to coach and mentor their counselors on the activities leading up to the development of an effective IPE.

**Goal #3:**

*Assure that DVR consumers throughout the State have timely access to assistive technology training services at all stages of the rehabilitation process, to increase the effectiveness with which they can participate in their rehabilitation program.*

**Assistive Technology and Adaptive Devices Specialists:** DVR continues to employ two individuals who specialize in assistive technology and adaptive devices. One position is physically located at the Denver Metro office within the Personal Adjustment Training program. The individual in this position provides training on assistive technology through a structured, center-based program and also travels directly to clients, when necessary to provide home-based training. He is also available for consultation, as needed, by counselors and consumers statewide. During FY 2005, the individual in this position attending a national training on assistive technology to ensure that he has the most current knowledge of the technology

available. The other position is located within the Business Enterprise Program, and is responsible for working independently with each of the blind business operators to ensure that they have, and can use effectively, the assistive technology required for them to operate their business.

**Provider Agreements:** During FY 2005, DVR significantly increased the number of providers with whom it maintains a provider agreement for assistive technology training. Currently, DVR maintains agreements with 105 vendors throughout Colorado who are authorized to provide rehabilitation technology training.

DVR recognizes that, while we have done a good job expanding the availability of assistive technology, there is still much work to be done in the area of training individuals to use it effectively, particularly in areas outside of Denver and the Western Slope. In addition, apart from the WesTac project on the Western Slope, the expanding availability of assistive technology has primarily been directed toward individuals who are blind, with more limited availability for individuals with other types of disabilities (i.e., the deaf population and individuals with learning disabilities) needing accommodations. This goal will be continued for FY 2006.

**Goal #4:**

*Increase the use of, and improve the effectiveness of, counseling and guidance provided by the VR counselor after initiation of the IPE.*

**Policy Regarding Contact:** DVR's 2002 policy on consumer contact states that counselors must personally contact all consumers as often as needed, no less than once every 60 days, to assure that they are personally aware of each individual's progress under the IPE. Once the individual obtains a job, counselors are expected to increase their contact frequency to a minimum of once every 30 days until the case is closed successfully. This policy appears to have had some impact on the extent to which IPEs are effectively monitored after their initiation. This is reflected in DVR's quality assurance data since the implementation of the policy, as well as in feedback from RSA's 107 monitoring case review for FFY 2004. However, there continues to be room for improvement in this area. As counselor vacancies continue to be filled and DVR policies are revised and clarified for ease of understanding, DVR expects to see continued improvement in this area.

**New Counselor Training:** Training sessions held for new counselors continues to emphasize the importance of regular contact and solid relationships with consumers at all stages of the process.

**Priority #2: Improve the quality of successful employment outcomes.**

DVR made significant progress on this priority. In federal fiscal year 2004, 90.1% of the successful employment outcomes achieved were in competitive employment. This is up from 88.9% the year before and exceeds the required performance level by 17.5 percentage points. 86% of these outcomes were for individuals with significant or most significant disabilities. In addition, while the average wage earned by all Colorado workers remained flat, the wage for DVR clients who obtained a competitive employment outcome increased by \$0.16 per hour. The only quality standard where DVR did not improve over the previous year was in the number of individuals whose primary source of support is their own income at closure versus

application. Standards and Indicator data for the first quarter of federal fiscal year 2005 shows that DVR has improved its performance on this indicator with 59.4% more people reporting at closure that their own income was their primary source of support than reported at application. This number is up from FFY 2004 (55.0) and also exceeds the level of performance that DVR achieved in FFY 2003 (58.6).

The following is a summary of the progress made through March of 2005 toward each of the goals associated with priority two.

**Goal #1:**

*Improve the effectiveness of the IPE planning process to facilitate the selection of employment outcomes that adequately balance individuals' employment strengths and aspirations with their resources and limitations through expanded career exploration of occupations other than those traditionally deemed suitable for persons with specific types of disabilities.*

As depicted in the chart below, individuals whose cases were closed successfully in 2004 were placed in a variety of jobs without regard to disability. Jobs in the clerical/sales, service, and professional/technical arenas are common across nearly all disability types. Blind and deaf individuals do have a higher rate of placement in processing type jobs, although counselors continue to utilize tools and time to assist customers in identifying and choosing the employment goal that is best for them. These efforts have become stronger in the past year and will continue to be a focus for DVR in the future.

Disability	Agriculture, Fishing, Forestry	Benchwork	Clerical, Sales	Machine Trades
Blind (n=138)	2.2%	.7%	(3) 13%	1.4%
Cognitive (n=529)	2.1%	2.6%	(2) 25%	(4) 4.7%
Deaf (n=160)	2.5%	1.9%	(1) 26%	3.1%
Interpersonal (n=261)	1.5%	1.5%	(1) 28%	5.4%
Neuro/Orthopedic (n=282)	1.8%	2.1%	(1) 35%	3.9%
Mental (n=136)	2.2%	2.2%	(2) 26%	(4) 5.1%
Sensory (n=27)	0%	3.7%	(2) 20%	3.7%
Respiratory (n=5)	0%	0%	0%	0%

Disability	Processing	Professional, Technical	Service	Structural Work
Blind (n=138)	(1) 51%	(4) 12%	(2) 16%	1.4%
Cognitive (n=529)	2.1%	7.6%	(1) 40%	(3) 6.0%
Deaf (n=160)	(4) 11%	(2) 21%	(3) 20%	6.3%
Interpersonal (n=261)	1.5%	(3) 16%	(2) 27%	(4) 8.0%
Neuro/Orthopedic (n=282)	3.2%	(2) 25%	(3) 16%	(4) 4.3%
Mental (n=136)	2.2%	(3) 24%	(1) 30%	.7%
Sensory (n=27)	3.7%	(3.4) 11%	(1) 33%	(3,4) 11%
Respiratory (n=5)	20%	20%	(1) 40%	0%

**Revised Documentation Process:** DVR's policy is to facilitate the consumer's selection of an employment outcome, based on a comprehensive assessment of an individual's strengths, weaknesses, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. The revised documentation process provides a greater degree of structure for this assessment and has improved the dialogue that occurs between the counselor and consumer with regard to the individual's strengths, aspirations, resources, and limitations, eventually leading to the individual's choice of employment goal. As part of this process, counselors actively encourage consumers to expand the scope of their exploration of career options to consider a wide range of options that are limited only by individuals' priorities, concerns, functional limitations, and availability of employment. Through its quality assurance case review process, DVR has seen an improvement in the quality in which counselors document the career options that were discussed as alternatives and the reasons that they were not chosen

**Counselor Knowledge of the Labor Market:** In FY 2005, DVR did in a number of things to ensure that counselors had a solid knowledge of labor market conditions that tend to heavily impact the types of employment goals that individuals choose:

- Two training sessions on labor market and career exploration were conducted and received excellent attendance from DVR counselors.
- Participation in the E-3 Career and Resource Fair that was hosted by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment and the Office of Workforce Development.
- DVR partnered with the Office of Workforce Development to ensure that tools and computers were available in workforce centers across Colorado for consumers to explore career opportunities.
- DVR's administrative office regularly forwards information received from the Office of Workforce Development to counselors regarding emerging industries.
- The Colorado Occupational and Career Information System (COCIS) has been made available to all field offices throughout the state.

**Emphasis on Self-employment:** DVR believes that self-employment, when chosen after careful consideration of an individual's strengths, weaknesses, abilities, capabilities, and interests, can be a realistic and appropriate employment goal for many individuals. During FY 2005, DVR restructured its self-employment program. Self-employment procedures were revised to assure that program guidelines and practices are practical, reasonable, consistent from office to office, and effective for consumers. In addition, DVR's Self-employment Consultant position was increased from a half-time to full-time position in November of 2004, and now reports to the Field Services Unit.

**Goal #2:**

*DVR should analyze and refine, if needed, its new documentation format that supports appropriate documentation of the vocational rehabilitation process, rationale for counselor decision-making, and accountability for quality outcomes.*

During the fall of 2004, several focus groups were conducted with counselors around the state to solicit feedback about the new documentation process. Incorporating aspects of the VR process necessary to address all of DVR's service delivery performance deficiencies into its documentation system resulted in documentation requirements that significantly exceed those stipulated by the Rehabilitation Act and its implementing regulations in some areas. Although DVR believes that this was necessary to force a rapid change in the orientation of how DVR's VR counselors prioritize casework activities and to guide the decision-making processes that

counselors engage in, we believe this has been accomplished. Thus, current efforts are focused on streamlining some of the paperwork processes. However, the Director has been very clear that streamlined paperwork will be accompanied by increased accountability for maintaining and improving the quality of VR casework practices and outcomes.

A committee was formed and worked intensively to review the required documentation and to recommend a simpler format, while maintaining the integrity of the structured decision-making process that evolved from the forms. The new forms were implemented on March 1, 2005 and will be monitored for effectiveness through DVR's quality assurance case review process during FY 2006.

**Goal #3:**

*DVR should analyze the effectiveness of its changed QA procedures on improving follow-up and accountability in responding to case review findings and in getting more precise measurements of changed service delivery and documentation behavior.*

DVR's quality assurance administrator position was filled on June 1, 2004 after having been vacant for ten months. Working with DVR's previous quality assurance team, the new administrator revised the previous QA review instrument and process to address the following concerns:

- Too much attention during QA reviews to compliance with rules at the expense of assessing and improving quality of service delivery
- Limited number of QA reviewers
- Insufficient tracking and reporting of QA findings to all levels of the organization for quality improvement
- Validity of QA results due to poor inter-rater consistency and small sample sizes
- Lack of integration of case review results with other quality assessment activities and planning.

Key components of the new process include:

- Quarterly service record reviews, allowing DVR to review more total cases throughout the year and providing DVR with a representative sample of the entire caseload.
- Reviews recent work by varying the scope of the reviews from quarter to quarter.
- Sample sizes for each quarter will be identified such that results can be interpreted with a minimum of a 90% confidence level and margin of error of 5% at the statewide level.
- Utilizes field supervisors, mentoring counselors, and state office administrative and management staff.
- Inter-rater reliability is emphasized through annual training during the July quarter of each year.
- The QA review instrument assures collection of meaningful and reliable data in enough detail to understand trends and plan necessary remediation initiatives, when necessary. Questions used during 107 monitoring reviews form the "base" for each review section. Additional questions that better assess the quality of decision-making and/or counselor documentation have been added to each section as well as a few questions concerning critical compliance issues.
- Results are compiled at the individual, supervisory, regional, and statewide levels. Regional managers will be responsible to assure that any deficiencies or areas of

concern are addressed and reported back to the QA administrator for tracking and reporting purposes.

**Performance on Standards and Indicators pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act for FFY 2004**

For federal fiscal year 2004, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation achieved successful performance on both Evaluation Standard #1 (employment outcomes) and Evaluation Standard #2 (equal access to services). The following table summarizes DVR's performance on all of the associated indicators.

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Required Performance Levels</b>	<b>Colorado DVR FFY 2004 Performance</b>
#1 Employment Outcomes	(1.1)	Equal or exceed previous performance period	(1625) - (1715) = -90
	(1.2)	55.8%	(1625/2944) X 100 = 55.20%
	(1.3)	*72.6%	(1464/1625) X 100 = 90.10%
	(1.4)	*62.4%	(1259/1464) X 100 = 86.00%
	(1.5)	*.52 (ratio)	\$10.16 / \$18.72 = .55
	(1.6)	53.0 (math difference)	75.30 - 20.30 = 55.0
#2 Equal Access to Services	(2.1)	.80 (ratio)	39.57 / 46.30 = .85

**Use of Title I Funds for FFY 2004 Innovation and Expansion Activities**

Total expenditures of Title I funds for innovation and expansion activities for FFY 2004 (October 1, 2003 through September 30, 2004) were as follows:

Support of the State Rehabilitation Council	\$ 23,343
Support of the State Independent Living Council	\$ 41,323
CCCS Project ACCESS/ROOTS	\$855,346
Division of Youth Corrections project	\$ 30,000

**Support of the State Rehabilitation and State Independent Living Councils.** The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation values and appreciates the collaborative efforts of both the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the State Independent Living Council (SILC). This positive collaborative working relationship has resulted in valued input and contributions to help DVR staff develop goals and priorities as well as strategies to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities as identified in the comprehensive needs assessment. In addition, the SRC is actively involved on an ongoing basis any time that DVR revisits and updates its service delivery policies and procedures. In 2005 and 2006, DVR will continue to use Title I funds for innovation and expansion to provide staff support and to pay for the operating, travel, and per diem costs of members of the SRC and the SILC.



**CCCS Project ACCESS/ROOTS.** The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Colorado Community College and Occupational Educational System (CCOES) have developed training and placement programs to provide employment for persons with disabilities in jobs that are not always readily available. The first program provides individuals with disabilities an array of customer service skills that can be used in careers ranging from direct customer service jobs to management jobs where good customer service skills are critical. The second program provides five different certificate tracks for persons with disabilities – General Office, Billing/Payroll Technician, Operational Accounting, Administration Assistant, and Financial Services. Through the use of paid internships, DVR is now able to provide a wider variety of employment opportunities.

**Division of Youth Corrections Project.** During FFY 2004, DVR and the Division of Youth Corrections completed a partnership strategy to improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to youth with disabilities who have been incarcerated. This strategy, which included the provision of vocational services by a vocational rehabilitation counselor with special expertise in working with troubled youth, was jointly funded by DVR and DYC. When DYC mandatory parole was cut from nine months to six months in 2003, the service delivery systems were no longer compatible in a way that would allow the project to be successful, and the partnership was terminated.

**ATTACHMENT 7.3**

*Quality, Scope and Extent of Supported Employment Services*

**FY 2006**



## Quality, Scope and Extent of Supported Employment Services

The 1998 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, reinforce and expand the roles of both vocational rehabilitation counselors and consumers with regard to supported employment services. Effective delivery of supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities requires professionals to become even more creative in looking beyond the traditional array of practices and services. Therefore, the skill and experience of vocational rehabilitation counselors are key to the development of successful supported employment programs. Ongoing training efforts continue to focus on helping counselors and other involved professionals understand the importance of and develop skills necessary to assure thorough consumer evaluation; realistic goal setting; development of precise plans of services, including objective progress reporting for the continuous process; and, meaningful recordkeeping.

Direct utilization of Titles I (Vocational Rehabilitation Services) and VI-B (Supported Employment Services) case services funds facilitates the counselor's ability to provide supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The resources available through the Title VI-B program are used only to provide supplemental evaluations and supported employment services, as identified in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), to assist eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities to obtain and secure community-integrated employment. Title VI-B funds are not used for services necessary to conduct the preliminary and comprehensive assessments to determine eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs or to provide job skill training unless it is provided at the worksite.

Supported employment services are provided to enable individuals with the most significant disabilities to obtain employment, to learn job skills, and to maximize their hour and wage employment opportunities in the competitive labor force. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will continue to provide a wide range of supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred or has been interrupted or intermittent and who need supported employment services and extended ongoing support services to attain and maintain integrated competitive employment.

### SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

- Supplemental evaluations are provided subsequent to the development of the IPE when necessary to reassess the particular ongoing support services needed and/or the suitability of the particular placement. Supplemental evaluations focus on the individual's environment, such as the need for and type of job station modification, rather than on the individual's functional limitations. Such evaluations are subject to neither the individual's financial participation nor a search for comparable services and benefits.
- Job Placement is provided to assist the individual procure adequate and suitable employment in a competitive work setting. This service may be provided by the counselor directly or may be provided by other community programs. It is subject to neither the individual's financial participation nor a search for comparable services and benefits.
- Transitional employment services are a series of competitive job placements in integrated work settings which are provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities due to mental illnesses when necessary to assist them achieve job permanency.

- Job seeking skills training is provided to teach individuals how to conduct a job search, how to prepare resumes and complete applications, and how to interview effectively. Job seeking skills may take place in a classroom setting, in a group setting, or on a one-to-one basis. When such services are included in plans of supported employment, they are normally provided in conjunction with transitional employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities due to mental illnesses. Job seeking skills are not subject to a search for comparable services and benefits.
- Intensive job training is provided by skilled job trainers after the individual has been placed in an integrated work setting to assist the individual in attaining his or her weekly work goal at a competitive wage and to achieve job stabilization. Job coaching services are specialized training services provided by an individual other than the employer, and on-the-job supported employment training services are provided by the employer through the use of co-workers as natural supports. Job coaching and on-the-job training are subject to neither the individual's financial participation nor a search for comparable services and benefits.
- Personal adjustment training is provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities when necessary to develop compensatory skills and/or to adjust behavior in the areas of social skills, peer work relationships, and supervisory work relationships. Personal adjustment training is subject to neither the individual's financial participation nor a search for comparable services and benefits.
- Rehabilitation technology services are assistive technology devices, assistive technology services and rehabilitation engineering which are provided to meet the needs of and address the barriers encountered by an individual with the most significant disability in the areas of training, employment, transportation, and independent living. Such services include, but are not limited to, non-medical adaptive equipment and devices as well as environmental adaptations or alterations to home, training sites, and employment settings to increase access and successful performance for individuals with the most significant disabilities in supported employment. (Rehabilitation technology services provided to individuals during the preliminary and comprehensive assessments when necessary to determine eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs are not considered supported employment services.) Rehabilitation technology services are not subject to a search for comparable services and benefits.
- Follow-up services, including regular contact with the employer, trainee, job coach, and the parent or guardian, and regular observation or supervision of the individual with a most significant disability at the training site, are provided to assess the individual's progress and performance and to assist the individual prepare for and maintain supported employment in a competitive work setting. Such services are subject to neither the individual's financial participation nor a search for comparable services and benefits.
- Post-employment services are provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities to enable them to maintain or regain suitable supported employment in integrated work settings. Such services are limited interventions which are unavailable from the extended services provider. Post-employment services address or relate to vocational rehabilitation needs identified prior to the original case closure, and include, but are not limited to, job station redesign, repair and maintenance of assistive technology devices, and replacement of prosthetic appliances. Extensive training services are not available under the provisions of post-employment services.

- Any other vocational rehabilitation service may be provided when necessary to prepare and support the individual in supported employment. Such services include, but are not limited to, physical and mental restoration services; vocational adjustment and other vocational and academic training; occupational licenses, tools and equipment; specialized services for the blind and/or deaf; and, support services, such as maintenance, transportation, services to family members, and personal assistance services.

The IPE for supported employment for an eligible individual with the most significant disability will include the individual's weekly work goal, job stabilization criteria, the supported employment services to be provided, the type and frequency of monitoring contacts which will be provided during the provision of supported employment services, at least quarterly periodic monitoring of the individual's progress towards achieving the weekly work goal, and a description of extended services needed.

Supported employment services provided under Title VI-B and Title I are limited to eighteen months unless the IPE reflects that a longer period is necessary to achieve the weekly work goal and attain job stabilization before the individual with the most significant disabilities transitions to extended services. IPEs for supported employment are developed for a maximum eighteen month period. However, the IPE can be amended to provide a longer period of services when substantial progress has been made in attaining the weekly work goal and the individual and counselor agree that a longer period of services is needed to fully attain the weekly work goal and/or stabilize employment. Such circumstances typically mean that the individual's performance has shown steady progress during the last three months and that the individual has attained a minimum of 75% of his or her weekly work goal by the eighteenth month.

A national emphasis in supported employment to normalize the work setting for individuals with most significant disabilities is stronger than ever. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation agrees that it is important to minimize the intrusiveness of the job coach model and to replace it with a model of natural supports by utilizing supervisors, co-workers, and Employee Assistance Programs, when available and appropriate to the individual's needs. The Division will continue to support and expand the use of natural supports in the work place, including supervisors, co-workers, independent living centers, friends or volunteers/mentors, and family members, as the preferred supported employment model.

During the provision of supported employment services, assessing job stabilization and transition to extended services is the final phase of the vocational rehabilitation counselor's involvement in the provision of supported employment services. Job stabilization, which occurs when the individual can and is reasonably expected to continue to perform all job duties acceptably, should be attained prior to transition to extended services. The timing and flexibility of the transition process is critical to ensure that the individual's placement is not jeopardized once the job coach fades from the job site. Training and technical assistance will continue to be provided to counselors and other service providers on how to identify the appropriate time to fade job coaching services and when extended support services, including natural supports, should begin. DVR and Mental Health Services have developed written guidelines for mental health centers which provide supported employment services to eligible individuals with serious mental illnesses to clarify their role in the provision and funding of extended services.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation believes that the need for supported employment cannot be met by vocational rehabilitation agencies alone but requires the collaborative efforts of all providers of services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. In accordance with this

belief, DVR continues to analyze and address the systems barriers in Colorado which have historically hindered local delivery of supported employment services. Toward this end, the Center for Technical Assistance and Training will be used by DVR to facilitate the expansion of natural supports in the workplace and to implement Personal Futures Planning for individuals with the most severe disabilities receiving supported employment services from the Division. Personal Futures Planning is a holistic consumer-centered approach to ongoing personal growth in which the consumer directs a team in the development of a plan that becomes the strategy for achieving his or her life's goals. This method is believed to improve the individual's quality of life and ensure that the individual is working toward those goals which are important to him or her. An integral quality of life indicator which is encompassed in Futures Planning is planning with the consumer for and attaining meaningful competitive employment.

DVR, Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), and Mental Health Services (MHS) have created an environment, through collaborative policy development and innovative funding initiatives, which encourages local provider agencies to enhance existing supported employment services. Efforts range from adding a supported employment service option to developing programming where supported employment is the only service option available. These efforts continue through cooperative agreements between DVR, DDS and MHS to expand and develop methods to provide effective supported employment services to mutual consumers.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's strong commitment to facilitate coordination and development of community-based supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities is also reflected in the prioritization of supported employment initiatives through DVR's grant awarding process. As a result, increasing numbers of community rehabilitation programs throughout the State have developed supported employment services to supplement those provided by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.