

**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 2015**

**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 more than twenty-five years. The SRC mission statement is:

“The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) provides individuals with disabilities a strong, substantive role in shaping the programs and services established to support their employment goals and aspirations and to provide clients of vocational rehabilitation services a mechanism to influence at the systemic and policy level the direction of vocational rehabilitation programming.”

The SRC meets every other month and has a yearly retreat. Minutes are maintained of all SRC meetings and retreats which summarize the advice and recommendations provided to DVR. DVR has continued to work closely with SRC this year, providing them with on-going reports in regards to finances, personnel, client services, Standards and Indicators, and wait list. DVR continues to regularly seek the advice of the SRC on various issues, including the state plan, client satisfaction, DVR policies, order of selection and wait list.

SRC members participated in a number of DVR workgroups this year in an effort to work jointly towards improving DVR processes and policies as well as to revise and update the client satisfaction survey.

In addition, the SRC and DVR worked in collaboration to hold four public hearings across the state to obtain public comment on state plan topics and possible policy changes. Flyers were posted in all DVR offices and on the DVR website and DVR partners were notified electronically. Clients, their families, stakeholders, partners and others were invited to share their feedback regarding seven targeted questions as well as provide general comments. In addition to providing comments at the meetings, anyone who could not attend but wanted to share their feedback or ask a question could do so by email, fax or phone. As a result of the information received from these sources, SRC has made the following recommendations they would like to see Colorado DVR focus on in the upcoming year.

## **RECOMMENDATION #1**

In order to provide effective and excellent customer service to all clients, the SRC recommends that DVR provide training to all staff that covers methods for dealing with difficult situations, answers to most frequently asked questions, and ideas for making clients feel welcome. Consistency across offices is needed. The development of specific checklists may be helpful for staff.

### **DVR RESPONSE**

DVR agrees excellent customer service is essential to fostering an environment most likely to support clients in the achievement of their vocational goals. Staff currently have access to a variety of training through the Department of Personnel & Administration's Statewide Training & Development Center that are designed to support strong customer service. Additional training to support good customer service is available through the Department Human Services' training Unit. Staff are supported to attend training of this nature when identified as a need by either the staff or his or her supervisor.

DVR will explore options for providing additional training and support to staff to ensure they are prepared to be responsive, engaging, and welcoming to all clients and to create a greater consistency across offices. In considering these options, DVR will work to identify strategies for considering which training is provided broadly to staff versus training that is better suited to address the performance of individuals.

## **RECOMMENDATION #2**

The SRC recommends that all counselors receive training in the area of work incentives including 1619(b), impairment related work expenses, and the Medicaid Buy-In program. Along with training, an easily understood handout would be helpful. This training will allow counselors to assist their clients when preparing for employment and will propel clients towards obtaining jobs.

### **DVR RESPONSE**

During the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, DVR was able to provide substantial work incentives training at the DVR Statewide Conference with a keynote and breakout sessions specifically focused on work incentives to include 1619(b) and the Medicaid Buy-In Program for Working

Adults with Disabilities (in May 2012) and at numerous regional training events around the state focused on self-employment, supported employment, and work incentives in general.

DVR agrees that there needs to be continued training and focus on work incentives for DVR staff. DVR values having counselors who are well-versed and knowledgeable of work incentives and recognizes these are a critical component to successful employment for clients with significant disabilities. DVR also recognizes the importance of partnering with Community Work Incentive Coordinators to ensure SSI/SSDI beneficiaries who are interested in pursuing employment have access to the level of support and expertise necessary to develop a clear understanding of the impact of work on their benefits, their responsibilities in communicating earnings to SSA, and the incentives that may be available to them to support their employment. DVR counselors can benefit from additional training to increase their knowledge of available work incentives. DVR will seek training opportunities to enhance understanding of work incentives. DVR will also strive to ensure the best possible working relationship between DVR counselors and the Community Work Incentive Coordinators in order to ensure clients have access to the appropriate service providers who are best equipped to aid clients in arranging available work incentives.

### **RECOMMENDATION #3**

As a result of a great deal of comments from the public hearings, the SRC recommends that DVR focuses on transition and considers serving youth by age 16.

As a result of comments from the public hearings, SRC recommends that the Youth Services and Transition Unit work to improve partnerships at the local level between DVR and education to increase appropriate referrals of all transitioning youth and to increase successful employment outcomes for those youth. By collaborating with education officials, DVR can provide consultation and technical assistance to assist education agencies in the planning and provision of services to students with disabilities as early as possible from school to post-school activities while conducting outreach and identification of students with disabilities.

### **DVR RESPONSE**

DVR agrees it is vital for all young people with disabilities to engage early in the process of transitioning from education to post-secondary employment goals and that success in this area is dependent upon the effectiveness of the local partnership. DVR's Youth Services and Transition

Unit will take the lead in implementing technical assistance, training, and support to increase DVR's presence and participation in schools to accomplish this.

As DVR's existing policy, jointly decided with CDE, does not have any age parameters on it, it does not require definition of a specific age. As stated in the Cooperative Services Handbook, "The optimum timing for DVR to begin working with a student with a disability is when he or she is ready, and available, to engage in the activities necessary to establish an employment goal, develop an employment plan, and participate in vocational services in order to become employed. The time at which this occurs is unique to each individual, and does not necessarily correspond to a specific age or a specific event such as graduation. Rather, it should occur at a time when the youth's emphasis shifts from an academic focus to an employment focus, and the youth becomes available for vocational programming. DVR requires that the employment plan for a DVR transition participant (not on a deferred services waiting list) must be developed and approved before the student leaves the school setting."

DVR commits to exploring policy to ensure we are in keeping with best practices and current trends.

#### **RECOMMENDATION #4**

The SRC recommends that DVR shall remove all clients from the wait list in the next year.

#### **DVR RESPONSE**

DVR agrees that it is vital to remove clients from the wait list in as timely a manner as possible, while also recognizing the need for fiscal responsibility and planning in order to be able to serve clients in an on-going manner. DVR has developed tools to help estimate timeframes to serve the three disability severity categories. These include monitoring financial resources and available funds, attrition rates, staffing levels and future Individualized Plan for Employment options. The timeframes to release individuals will vary depending on these criteria. DVR has increased emphasis on monitoring case costs and will monitor the budget on a monthly basis and make adjustments, as needed, to determine the appropriate number of individuals that can be removed from the wait list and ensure sufficient fiscal and personnel resources are available.

## **RECOMMENDATION #5**

In order to receive on-going and effective feedback and recommendations from clients, partners, stakeholders, and vendors, etc. the SRC recommends that DVR continues to review the methodologies for distributing and administering satisfaction surveys. DVR should explore expanding sample size, reaching under-represented groups, possible use of web based surveys, follow up phone calls and other response methods while maintaining anonymity, as well as considering the possible use of incentives to encourage people to fill out surveys.

### **DVR RESPONSE**

DVR agrees and will continue to review and implement, as appropriate, all available options for obtaining accurate, reliable and anonymous feedback about client satisfaction.

## **RECOMMENDATION #6**

The SRC recommends that DVR work closely with the executive and legislative branches of Colorado government to fully utilize Colorado's share of Rehabilitation Services Administration matching funds. Colorado cannot afford to leave \$4.16 million in federal funds on the table for every dollar in state General Fund invested. This is particularly true when Colorado citizens with disabilities have been on a DVR wait list since early 2013.

### **DVR RESPONSE**

DVR agrees that sustaining funding is essential to continuity of service. DVR will undertake a two pronged strategy to achieve this by modeling the accountability and sound operation necessary to secure public trust and by following all state and departmental protocol required to educate decision makers about the mechanics of federal match and the impact of those funds on the lives of Coloradoan job seekers with disabilities.

DVR looks forward to continuing to use the SRC members' expertise, skills and creativity as a valuable resource for achieving its goals and objectives, resulting in increased quality and quantity of successful employment outcomes for DVR clients.

**ATTACHMENT 4.8(b)(1)**

Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide  
Workforce Investment System

**FY 2015**

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

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has cooperative relationships 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 clients.

In all of the coordination activities throughout the State, the goal is to reduce the duplication of services and to maximize the DVR client's opportunity to obtain an employment outcome of his/her choice.

### **Mental Health (MH) Programs**

DVR is currently implementing its statewide provision of services. DVR offices work cooperatively with a number of mental health programs. The Mental Health Supported Employment Program operates under a formalized agreement between DVR and The Office of Behavioral Health and involves local level supported employment agreements with twelve (12) Mental Health Centers, one (1) non-profit organization, and two (2) private vendors throughout the State. DVR will approach currently nonparticipating Centers for inclusion into this program. Services consist of job development, job seeking skills, job coaching, and on-going support.

The purpose of this project is to enhance employment opportunities for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness or Persons In Recovery. This program has resulted in increased integrated employment opportunities for these individuals.

A comprehensive program evaluation was completed on all mental health sites participating in the MH contract this year, including site visits to the mental health centers as well as discussions with DVR counselors about how the program was working, what was working well and what



improvements might help the program. Final reports indicated program strengths, common themes found across all programs, regional differences in service delivery and training needs.

Throughout the regions 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.

DVR staff meets with staff from various vocational 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 Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients with disabilities to reduce their dependency on public assistance through employment. Counselors and supervisors have increased efforts and activities with county social service agencies in working with recipients of TANF, who have disability related employment issues.

DVR works closely with TANF offices across the state to coordinate services. In addition, some staff serve on various TANF committees. A DVR counselor serves as a member of the TANF 60 Month Review Committee, which includes members from various agencies & disciplines who vote on individuals' requests for extension of TANF benefits (beyond the 60 month lifetime allowed). This committee also works together to make recommendations for participants, such as referrals to DVR, to mental health services, and to other appropriate agencies.

The TANF 60 Month Review Committee can also mandate specific tasks (must attend 8 therapy sessions within "x" amount of time, must have the Med 9 form completed and signed, must participate in life skills activities, etc.) that recipients must complete in order to have continuation of TANF benefits. Agency staff have also been involved with Colorado Department of Human

Services' Self-Sufficiency Services working together to improve TANF recipients' access to needed services and quality employment.

### Educational Partners

At the administrative level, DVR collaborates with counterparts identified at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to assist DVR staff, educators, students and their families in the delivery of transition services. Together with representatives from CDE and DVR, training, support, technical assistance and materials are developed and made available statewide to those providing services to transitioning youth within each of our respective programs to ensure all youth exiting out of the K-12 education system with post school outcomes of employment have a clear and seamless path to vocational rehabilitative services.

The School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) is established through a series of 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. Over the years, DVR has maintained an average of 39 School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) sites. 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 closed rehabilitated follow-up support.

Each supervisory district has multiple SWAP contracts. On average, 130 of Colorado's 178 school districts (64% of the administrative educational units) are currently involved in operating a SWAP partnership within the local communities that are established within those districts. On average, over 2,500 youth are served each year through SWAP. 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 despite DVR's current wait list imposed by Order of Selection.

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 Colorado/Wyoming 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 clients 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.

### Community Centered Boards

Community Centered Boards (CCB) serving persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities are important partners in DVR's effort to assure the availability of quality vocational rehabilitation services throughout the state.

Currently, DVR has one counselor whose office is co-located on site at the local CCB site. In the other areas of the state, DVR counselors and supervisors meet frequently with Community Centered Board staff to coordinate service delivery. These counselors focus on promoting successful community employment outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities who have been determined eligible and are recipient of services through the CCB system. In addition, the Coordinator of Supported Employment for DVR meets regularly with the Supported Employment Coordinator at the Division for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) to discuss issues impacting services.

The collaboration between DVR and the CCBs is especially evident in DVR's delivery of supported employment services. For DVR clients who meet Community Centered Board eligibility for service delivery, the CCB works cooperatively with DVR counselors to ensure the provision of extended ongoing support services and the success of the individual's supported employment outcome. DVR staff, working together with CCB staff, assist and facilitate client's expression of choice in service delivery options, employment outcomes, and providers of services through networks of "approved service agencies". DVR staff attend board and committee meetings to facilitate an effective working relationship between our agencies.

DVR has a full-time Coordinator of Supported Employment Services. This person serves on the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council representing DVR. In addition, DVR has four lead DD

counselors to help more effectively coordinate and provide quality services for individuals with developmental disabilities. These counselors serve as regional liaisons, providing training, guidance and support to all counselors in their areas to establish standards of practice with the local CCB's. In addition, their duties include functioning as the expert and serving as a liaison between the CCB and the local DVR offices as well as various community partners, vendors and independent contractors. These individuals will also work as a team in conjunction with the Supported Employment Program Coordinator to identify emerging trends and issues, develop new and or unique services in the community and evaluate existing programs for persons with developmental disabilities.

Currently, the HCBS-DD waiver and SLS Supported Employment Coordinator for DIDD and the Coordinator of Supported Employment for DVR are conducting meetings at all twenty Community Centered Boards in Colorado. Attending these meetings are CCB Case Managers, vocational service providers, and DVR counselors and supervisors. The purpose is to learn what is working and areas that may need improvement. The site visits are written up and distributed to all attendees.

In the fall of 2012 and the summer of 2013, DVR along with the Division for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) provided regional training in four areas of the state bringing together direct service provider staff from CCBs, DVR and local service providers. The trainings feature information on work incentives, providing smooth and seamless referrals to DVR, individualized employment and a variety of other subjects. These regional trainings will be offered again in the fall of 2014.

### 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, staff work 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.

## Colorado AgrAbility

The Colorado AgrAbility Project promotes success in agriculture for people with disabilities or other physical challenges and their families. Colorado AgrAbility is part of a nationwide network of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs begun through the 1990 Farm Bill. Colorado AgrAbility works in collaboration with Colorado State University and Goodwill Industries of Denver. The goal of the National AgrAbility Project is to inform, educate, and assist farmers, ranchers, farm workers, and their families with disabilities, so they can continue to have successful careers in agriculture.

Colorado AgrAbility can help by a) assessing agricultural work sites and tasks, b) recommending farm equipment adaptation, home modifications, and adaptive equipment, c) referring families to local service providers, and d) providing informational and educational winter workshops from the Colorado State University Cooperative Extension for farmers, ranchers and family members with disabilities and the professionals who work with them.

## Colorado's Workforce System

DVR works collaboratively with various programs within the Colorado Department of Labor Employment (CDLE). Staff coordinate and conduct cross-training with the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and Federal Bonding programs. Colorado has an interagency agreement with CDLE allowing for a nightly upload of data for the WOTC program streamlining employer tax credit applications. DVR is a regular member of the Colorado Rural Workforce Consortium, a Workforce Investment Board that covers the majority of Colorado counties. DVR is represented on local workforce boards in urban and rural areas of the state.

## Employer Engagement and Business Outreach Specialist Services

DVR has 12.5 Business Outreach Specialist (BOS) positions throughout Colorado. The BOS positions create and sustain important employer relationships with DVR's small, medium, large, Federal and Federal contracting employers. BOS staff work with DVR's pool of "ready" job seekers and partner with private job developers and job development programs to increase opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

BOS staff members determine beneficial memberships at the local level to include Chambers of Commerce, Society of Human Resource Management chapters, economic development groups, etc. Through the efforts of the BOS and other DVR staff, the Division is regularly called upon for Disability Awareness Training, job fairs, and other opportunities to exhibit and provide disability employment information.

This year, DVR has prepared for the changes to Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act in order to be valuable resources for Federal Contractors. BOS staff have received training on the 503 changes, have met with the Office of Federal Contractor Compliance Programs, and have responded to Federal contractor inquiries for information on compliance and Affirmative Action planning.

DVR has also piloted the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) in three areas of the state and plans to expand participation following the pilot in June 2014. The manager of DVR's Work Supports and Employer Engagement unit presented on TAP as well at the National Employment Team (NET) at the 2014 Southwest and Rocky Mountain (SWARM) regional Industry Liaison Group (ILG) conference in Denver.

#### Federal Business Outreach Specialist (BOS)

DVR has maintained critical Federal agency relationships despite the loss of Federal Business Outreach personnel in September 2013. Due to the DVR Order of Selection wait list and fiscal challenges, re-hiring of the position was postponed. However, Work Supports and Employer Engagement staff have continued to respond to Schedule A appointment opportunities.

DVR has also continued the Department of Interior (DOI)/Jefferson County Schools Project SEARCH program. This program, in its second year, saw 11 students successfully complete the year-long set of work experiences. A challenge this school year was the fact that the majority of students were on the DVR wait list rather than under an Individualized Plan for Employment. However, DVR staff maintained involvement and helped to brainstorm post work experience job development options for the graduates.

During October, DVR partnered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to train hiring managers on Schedule A. The Bureau of Reclamation at DOI and DVR initiated a new job

placement strategy utilizing DVR's Paid Work Experience (PWE) program. Four individuals have gone through the PWE program to date, two have been offered permanent employment, and one continues to receive PWE hours at present and may be considered for employment at the conclusion. DVR has conducted informational sessions with the Division of Wildlife and the Internal Revenue Service in hopes of expanding the PWE program.

### Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Program Initiatives

#### Screening and Identification Protocol for TBI:

The TBI Program partnered with the general DVR program to implement a screening and identification protocol for traumatic brain injury. The Director of the TBI Program facilitated a work group comprised of representatives from each of the DVR regions. The screening and identification protocol pilot took place in two offices. Over the course of a year the two pilot sites screened for TBI at time of intake for each client entering into DVR. 171 individuals were screened for a lifetime history of TBI. 59 individuals screened positive, resulting in approximately 35% of the sample screening significant enough to warrant further assessment to determine the impact of the history of TBI. Following the pilot DVR counselors were surveyed to determine if they felt the protocol was useful and effective. Overall the counselors felt the screening tool was effective, however, they did not feel it was necessary to screen everyone at time of intake. Of significant concern was the added burden of screening time and completing the accommodations checklist.

The protocol included the following components:

1. Foundational education on traumatic brain injury for all DVR counselors
2. Implementing a screening/structured interview via use of a validated screening tool
3. Decision matrix for determining appropriate routes for assessment
4. Assessing accommodations that will be helpful for the individual to achieve success in working through the DVR process and ultimately in achieving employment

Next steps: The TBI Director would like to continue to work with the work group to determine how to ensure these tools are available and used as appropriate. The DVR TBI Work Group will also be focusing attention on addressing barriers for individuals with brain injury in terms of achieving employment success. Issues may include supported employment and infrastructure

support to individuals with brain injury to maintain success. The group is also considering developing a statewide brain injury team that would be comprised of DVR representatives across each region of the state. This team would be available to provide consultation and technical assistance support to their colleagues in terms of supporting individuals with brain injury.

#### Partnership with the Colorado Department of Education:

Via funding from the Colorado TBI Trust Fund, the Brain Injury Program has a partnership with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to provide training to increase skills and knowledge of the systems and people that serve children with brain injury and to provide consultation to school personnel and families for students referred to Youth Brain Injury Connections (YBIC). YBIC is a program for children/youth with brain injury. This program is funded through the CO TBI Trust Fund.

#### Brain Injury Education and Health Consultants:

In partnership with the Brain Injury Program, the CDE employs Brain Injury Education and Brain Injury Health Consultants. The goals of these Consultants are to:

- Develop a network of school based brain injury teams and/or points of contacts within the school districts
- Develop a method for identification, assessment and intervention for children with brain injury
- Implement a hospital to school transition protocol (including emergency departments)
- Build capacity of school personnel to better serve students identified with brain injury
- Develop policies, best practice guidelines etc. to ensure access to, and utilization of, best methods for supporting students with brain injury.

#### Statewide Brain Injury Liaison:

In partnership the Brain Injury Program, CDE employs a Statewide Brain Injury Liaison. The Liaison provides support to families with brain injury to identify educational support needs. The Liaison provides technical assistance and consultation support to school personnel to better support students with brain injury.



#### Potential Future Initiatives within DVR:

- 1) The TBI Program would like to work with the DVR General Program to provide cross training for the Colorado Brain Injury Adult Services Program Brain Injury Support Specialist and DVR staff so that each can be a more effective partner and support to the other as they serve adults with brain injury.
- 2) The TBI Program is beginning conversations with the Manager of the Program and Program Development Unit to possibly develop a statewide brain injury resource team. This team would be comprised of DVR field staff from each region of the state. They would either currently possess or be provided with specific training in brain injury. This team would act as a resource to all DVR counselors in terms of how to most effectively provide assessment, planning and support for DVR participants with brain injury.

#### Project SEARCH

Colorado DVR has four Project SEARCH sites across the state. Current sites include Boulder, Fort Collins, Denver and Aurora. Transitioning youth have been placed into a variety of work experience settings at several DOI bureaus including Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Business Center, Office of Natural Resources Revenue, US Geological Survey and National Park Service as well as Children's Hospital, Boulder Community Health and Columbine Health Systems. Twenty six transitioning youth are currently participating in the program. Four of these youth have been hired at the site in which they participated and two youth have been hired into other positions off-site. The remaining youth are seeking employment with placement assistance from the local Community Centered Board. Current Project Search sites are expected to continue next year.

#### Hands on Hyatt

DVR continues to partner with the Hyatt Hotels and Hands On training to provide culinary/hotel occupations training to eligible individuals. The program has slowed in this year due to the DVR wait list, but a recent graduation was held in February 2014 at which the very first front desk clerk graduate was honored.

## ASPIRE

This year, the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is joining forces with similar agencies in five other western states to recruit and enroll 2,000 low-income youth with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 16 in a program designed to improve their educational and employment outcomes.

State agencies in Arizona, Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Utah formed a consortium and were awarded a \$32.5 million U.S. Department of Education grant under the Promoting the Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Incomes (PROMISE) Initiative.

The six-state consortium, Achieving Success by Promoting Readiness for Education and Employment or ASPIRE, will begin recruiting teens and their families in Spring 2014. The ASPIRE group will include rural, frontier and tribal youth receiving supplemental security income, setting it apart from similar efforts in Arkansas, California, Maryland, New York and Wisconsin where urban and suburban populations are being targeted.

The terms of the federal grant mean that 1,000 of the 2,000 teens and their families who enter the program will be offered additional case management, benefits counseling, financial capability training, career and work-based learning experiences, and parent information and training over the course of five years. The two groups, those who receive the additional services and those who receive existing services, will be compared at the end of five years to determine the effectiveness of the program. Colorado will be working with 400 total youth, 200 youth receiving existing service and 200 youth receiving additional services.

## Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG)

While the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) ended, DVR continues a commitment to information dissemination and has maintained important partnerships established during the MIG.

DVR continues to collaborate with the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) to keep a focus on employment within Medicaid programs. Updates on the Medicaid Buy-In Program for Working Adults with Disabilities are sent to staff along with information on other insurance options available through Connect for Health Colorado.

DVR has also partnered with the Piton Foundation on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in general to create awareness among DVR clients about public and private insurance options. On an annual basis, DVR participates in an information campaign with Piton on the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

DVR has continued to bring together partners interested in staying abreast of work incentives through quarterly training events on topics such as Student Earned Income Exclusion, Impairment Related Work Expenses, Medicare Plans, etc. Partnership Plus, part of the Ticket to Work program, starts its second year with post-DVR referral processes with several Employment Networks (ENs). DVR's Ticket to Work coordinator maintains regular communication with ENs and continues to strive for increased Partnership Plus referrals of DVR clients.

#### Colorado Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC)

For the past several years, DVR has supported the on-going and statewide availability of work incentives consultation. DVR, through an annual purchase order, assures that Ability Connection Colorado (ACC) – the grant recipient of the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) -- has adequate funding to provide personnel necessary to cover all parts of Colorado. DVR works with ACC program management to assure effective referral processes throughout the state.

#### BOND (Benefit Offset National Demonstration) Project

DVR is in the fourth year of a seven year partnership with Abt Associates and Ability Connection Colorado (formerly known as CP of Colorado) implementing the Benefit Offset National Demonstration (BOND) project in Colorado and Wyoming. Funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA), BOND is operating in ten different locations across the United States. Using a rigorous study design, the intent of the BOND project is to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of a variety of service levels and work incentives that, when offered to Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) beneficiaries, result in the beneficiaries obtaining and maintaining successful employment outcomes.

Within the BOND Project, DVR provides work incentive counseling, service coordination, and information and referral services to SSDI beneficiaries who have been randomly selected and enrolled in the Project. When these beneficiaries return to work, DVR assures that the beneficiary receives financial incentives not available to other SSDI beneficiaries. DVR's participation in the Project will enable DVR to be on the cutting edge of new approaches and strategies for service delivery that are intended to improve the effectiveness of services provided to SSDI beneficiaries supporting a return to work and a better quality of life for the beneficiaries.

### ADA NETWORK

DVR is a strong partner with the recently renewed Rocky Mountain ADA Center based out of Colorado Springs. This organization provides technical assistance and information to a six state region. Ten DVR staff members are a part of the center's ADA Network. These staff members, primarily DVR Business Outreach Specialists, receive advanced training on the ADA and the Amendments Act and are available for training upon request. The Rocky Mountain ADA Center is committed to on-going training and collaboration holding bi-monthly network calls, annual national training sponsorships, and regular educational opportunities.

### Other Collaboration

- In Fort Collins, DVR staff regularly attend the area Vet Network meetings to connect and collaborate with the Veterans Administration and other agencies to discuss services, resources, and employment opportunities for disabled veterans. In addition, each staff member is assigned as a liaison to work closely with a major agency such as the local workforce center boards, local mental health agencies, local school districts, etc.
- A number of agencies, workgroups and regional staff have developed grant proposals and implemented new grants that have expanded services to persons with disabilities.
  - Ability Connections Colorado
  - ASPIRE/Promise
  - Research and Technical Assistance Center (RTAC)
  - the Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado.
  - Office of Behavioral Health

DVR continues to keep an eye on innovative grant opportunities to help participants reach successful employment outcomes.

- DVR also has relationships with:
  - the Division for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
  - local Community Centered Boards
  - the School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP)
  - the Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC)
  - The Denver Regional Mobility and Access Council, etc.
- DVR also works closely with the following agencies:
  - National Federation for the Blind
  - Ability Connection Colorado
  - Craig Hospital
  - Mi Casa
  - The Women's Bean Project
  - Bayaud Industries
  - Goodwill Industries
  - Other NISH contractors
- Chamber of Commerce memberships are being used by some DVR field offices to generate relationships with more local employers. DVR anticipates more field offices to become members of their local Chambers of Commerce.

**ATTACHMENT 4.8 (b)(2)**

Coordination with Education Officials

**FY 2015**

## **Coordination with Education Officials**

Since 1985, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has partnered with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), as well as with local school districts and Boards of Cooperative Education (BOCES), in supporting a comprehensive transition planning and service delivery process for youth with disabilities. DVR has organized a Youth Services and Transition Unit within Administration falling under the leadership of the Deputy Director of Field Services. This Unit is responsible for assuring the quality provision of vocational rehabilitation to Colorado's youth with disabilities.

DVR continues to monitor and assure implementation of the state-level agreement between DVR and CDE. This agreement promotes flexible and collaborative planning and service delivery among DVR, local education agencies, 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. The agreement also 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 vocational rehabilitation services complement services provided by education agencies and that the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for students who are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services will be developed and approved before these students leave the school setting (or if Colorado DVR is operating under an order of selection, before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting). The key tenets of this agreement have been developed into a desktop guide, which is updated regularly entitled, "The CDE/DVR Cooperative Services Handbook for Youth in Transition". Thousands of these handbooks are distributed annually to youth, parents, educators, VR counselors and community-based agency providers.

Each year we strive to include DVR and education staff in ongoing activities to promote a seamless transition for youth exiting out of education into the adult world of

employment. As we move forward into the upcoming federal fiscal year, we are examining our practices and methods with a focus on service delivery to transitioning youth. Taking into consideration feedback from partners, public hearing feedback, and data collected from C-Stat and audit exercises, it is our intent to improve existing partnerships and create new ones where they are absent at the local level between DVR and education. The goal is to increase appropriate referrals and successful employment outcomes for transitioning youth.

By collaborating with education officials, DVR can provide consultation and technical assistance to assist education agencies in the planning and provision of services to students with disabilities as early as possible from school to post-school activities while conducting outreach and identification of students with disabilities. Other mechanisms will be explored including expanding the Youth Services and Transition Unit to meet the ever growing need of Colorado's youth with disabilities in preparing for career entry opportunities.

Time was spent this year updating materials and continuing to build upon training, technical assistance and support to the field through our partnership with CDE. We continue to identify promising practices that can be shared throughout the state to benefit youth in particular work experience opportunities which requires collaboration with other entities such as the work force centers and local employers. The five part series of transition modules presented to all DVR Counselors last year have now been placed on DVR's intranet as a resource. Lead DVR Counselors have been instructed to use these tools as part of their routine internal training efforts with new staff. The series will be updated regularly to ensure current information is being shared with staff. CDE aligns similar activities with local school district staff to reinforce the collaboration.

Endeavors to cross train staff will continue to aid in greater awareness and understanding of service delivery and how each partner's efforts can complement one another for better student outcomes. DVR works in conjunction with CDE to align training. This allows us to model our expectations for collaboration with field staff. This approach to cross training advances local procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities. For example, DVR continues to participate in annual regional cadre meetings facilitated by CDE to reinforce the continuum and linkages to adult services while CDE makes themselves available for presentations to DVR staff.



DVR plays an integral role in annual institutes facilitated by CDE for local education teams to elevate awareness and expand our presence within education. The purpose of the institutes is to improve the quality of services in the area of secondary special education and transition services at the local level through knowledge, capacity building, dissemination and outreach with oversight from the National Secondary Transition /Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC). Efforts focus on improving indicator outcomes resulting in effective transition practices for youth with disabilities both at the state and local levels. DVR commits content experts, presenters, and technical assistance to local teams and counselors to aid in linkages.

Together with CDE, DVR takes an active role in state youth groups and committees promoting ongoing collaboration between community agencies in the provision of comprehensive transition services. Ongoing participation in such groups promotes better coordination of services and shared resources at both the state and local levels. It enables us to participate in the development of processes, procedures, guidelines and practices for more effective transitioning planning and services.

During the past five years, DVR has expanded its involvement with the Advisory Committee on Homeless Youth (ACHY). DVR actively elevates awareness to the issue of homelessness which impacts young adults with disabilities, adversely affecting their ability to access services and ultimately become contributors to the success of Colorado's workforce. At the state level, DVR has a presence on the Advisory Committee on Homeless Youth (ACHY) and supports working, local relationships between DVR counselors, SWAP providers and the educational liaison for this population. Annually, we endorse the Homeless and Runaway Youth Awareness Month in November by supporting local events statewide, promoting the Green Light Project and collecting essential winter clothing so youth are able to job search. This year there was a greater push to expand ACHY events around the state.

Through DVR's partnerships with education, resource fairs were conducted around the state this fall that included an employment component. DVR will continue to maintain an active role in promoting access to vocational rehabilitation services for youth with disabilities who are homeless by participating at the state level in ACHY and disseminating information to local DVR offices and partners.

Individuals ages 15-19 are one of the highest at risk populations for traumatic brain injury (TBI). When acquired, these youth and their families struggle with unexpected challenges including how to navigate adult service systems. Collaborating with the TBI Trust Fund has provided a means to help families and medical service providers to understand both education and adult employment systems, ultimately better preparing youth to identify and receive the support they need to secure employment. DVR and education maintain an ongoing relationship with the TBI Trust Fund as a resource to families, service providers and medical professionals to lessen the gap between education and employment for youth with TBI.

In 2008, the Colorado General assembly created the Colorado Autism Commission in order to obtain additional information on people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in the state, and DVR was invited to participate. The Commission was tasked with identifying existing services and the gaps in these services as experienced by the ASD community and to determine appropriate actions to remedy these shortcomings through the preparation of a Ten Year Strategic plan. Efforts on the Autism Commission are being further explored through Ad-Hoc groups to bring information to family members. DVR is available to assist in these efforts as they pertain to employment when requested. For example, DVR's Youth Services and Transition Unit presented this year at a family training event hosted by ARC, highlighting available resources youth can access as they move into the adult world.

The Mental Health Advisory Council (MHAC) recognizes the growing need of youth with mental health disabilities exiting the school system and preparing to enter employment as a population needing expanded efforts. DVR and CDE counterparts contribute time and support to the Under 26 Transition Work Group, a subcommittee of the MHAC. DVR and CDE staff, along with representatives from other partnering agencies, combine their efforts to provide ongoing interactive webinar series to address what works for youth in transition ages 14 - 25. This group also completed a resource toolkit to assist youth with chronic mental illness to navigate towards independence.

Colorado was awarded a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) in 2010, which expired in 2012. One purpose of the MIG is to support the implementation of Colorado's Medicaid Buy-In Program (MBI) for working adults (ages 16 – 64) with disabilities. The MBI impacts the transition of youth from post-secondary as well as those exiting out of high

school and entering the work force. DVR actively promotes information about MIG to youth and their families to ensure they are informed of their choices pertaining to work and benefits. Colorado DVR, along with a consortium of states including Utah, Arizona, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota, was awarded a five year ten million dollar grant for Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Income (PROMISE).

The program, to be called ASPIRE by the consortium, will promote positive changes in the outcomes for youth with disabilities ages 14-16 who receive SSI by making better use of existing resources, improving coordination among programs and better outcomes for youth and their families. DVR has maintained an average of 38 School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) sites. These sites involve approximately 130 of Colorado's 178 school districts. SWAP serves over 2,500 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 clients.

DVR continues to maintain membership on the Colorado State Youth Council (SYC), which is a subcommittee of the Colorado Workforce Development Board. One goal of the SYC is to identify and support existing strategies, practices and projects that demonstrate success, and to augment and introduce other successful practices throughout Colorado. Each year, local communities are invited to submit local promising practices to the SYC that effectively address the needs of youth who are transitioning into adulthood. Submissions are scored against the National Center on Workforce and Disability's (NCSD) evidence-based Design Guideposts for Success. These are: school preparation; youth development and leadership; career preparation; connecting activities; and family involvement and supports.

The SYC recognizes selected promising practices every other year at the Think Big Youth Forum. The Think Big Youth Forum is sponsored by the SYC, the Colorado Department of Labor, the Office of Workforce Development, the Colorado Department of Education and DVR. The Youth Forum brings together statewide youth practitioners from vocational rehabilitation, education and workforce development for two days of professional development. The promising practices recognized at the Forum are highlighted and receive a monetary award to further the efforts of the practice or

program. The SYC continues to expand their efforts to work more closely with local youth councils using Colorado's Blue Print, a bottom-up economic development planning initiative. This benefits the youth we serve by moving them towards employment outcomes in the various industry sectors.

The benefits of providing work based learning for youth is evident as youth identify career interests, skills and abilities and learn about work place expectations and job requirements, all which improve post school outcomes. As a result, additional work experience opportunities for youth are being explored around the state by partnering with local employers, workforce centers, education and DVR. Currently, we have several ongoing hands-on paid work experiences in employment settings such as hospitals, nursing homes and gardening centers. DVR anticipates continuation of this type of collaboration.

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.

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, counselors attend job and resource fairs, back-to-school nights, and parent-teacher conference nights. They present information about DVR at residential treatment centers, residential childcare facilities and at teacher in-service events. DVR will continue these types of outreach, education and consultation activities with our school partners for the purpose of providing consultation and technical assistance to assist them as they plan the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school services, including vocational rehabilitation.

DVR developed and annually updates an outreach and presentation toolkit for DVR counselors who are working with school districts, youth and parents. Education and DVR strive for an effective and consistent referral process in place for all youth between

our agencies at the local level. In collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), the Youth Services and Transition Unit is working to identify ways in which we can improve services to transitioning youth.

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.

The DVR Youth Services and Transition Unit will continue to be available as a resource to the State Independent Living Council (SILC) and the Supported Employment Services Coordinator to assist both Independent Living Centers (ILC) and Mental Health Contracts in meeting their transition components.

Outreach efforts to youth with visual impairments, and those who are deaf/hard of hearing are an area of emphasis for the Youth Services and Transition Unit. For example, an introduction was made between a lead Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing to a CDE counterpart. As a result of this newly formed partnership, the counselor was invited to participate on a committee to form new policies for transitioning youth who are deaf/hard of hearing at a PEP Net conference. We continue to look for opportunities which will promote improved services to these populations of youth. This includes promoting the option for self-employment when viable for a youth.

**ATTACHMENT 4.8(b)(3)**

Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-Profit Organizations

**FY 2015**

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

DVR currently has few formal cooperative agreements with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

DVR does administer two programs mandated by Title VII of the Act:

- the Colorado State Independent Living Services (SILS) program and
- the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) program.

Both programs are currently run out of Colorado's statewide network of nine Centers for Independent Living (Centers), which provide services to individuals with significant disabilities who face barriers to living self-directed lives in their communities.

Under the SILS program, Centers provide independent living skills training, individual and systems advocacy, peer counseling, assistance with social security applications, transportation, housing and many other services that support clients to set and achieve their goals of living independently in their community. This diverse and extensive list of service types allows Centers to provide the holistic support that many clients with significant disabilities may need. The new state plan for the Colorado State Independent Living Services program has expanded to include a focus on working with youth and transition services.

The OIB program serves people who are 55 and older who are blind or have impairments to their vision. Clients tend to be people who are experiencing vision loss from age-related factors and who are concerned about losing independence, either in their home or in their community. The OIB program helps clients learn new skills and identify community resources that will support their participation in full, independent lives. The OIB program is funded through an RFP process to eligible vendors across the State in a three year grant cycle.

In addition, DVR has a Brain Injury program that provides support to other state agencies to better identify, assess and support individuals with brain injury within their systems. Additionally, the Brain Injury Program manages the Colorado Traumatic Brain

Injury Trust Fund. The three programmatic areas required by state statute are; education, research and services. To fulfill education and research the program awards grants to organizations to conduct education and research. To meet the services need, the program contracts with partners such as, the Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado who complete intake and eligibility, Rocky Mountain Human Services who provide case management for adults with brain injury, local health agencies that house the Health Care Program for Children with Special Needs who provide care coordination for children and the Colorado Department of Education who provide educational support for children with brain injury. The program serves approximately 800 individuals annually statewide.

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 clients. DVR also works cooperatively with CP of Colorado with the Community Work Incentive Coordinators.

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, and
- 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 clients.

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 clients 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. Approval then goes to DVR's staff authorized to sign provider agreements under contract waiver H1115. 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 clients. 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 and certify that:

- Purchases of services and goods maximize the efficient and effective use of public funds, and
- Services and goods will only be purchased from qualified providers, and
- All vendors who wish to provide services to DVR clients have the opportunity to do so and are subject to a consistent set of terms and conditions, and
- Most importantly, DVR's clients will have a wide range of options to choose from when selecting service providers.

**ATTACHMENT 4.8 (b)(4)**

Evidence of Collaboration Regarding  
Supported Employment Services and Extended Services

**FY 2015**

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

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Office of Workforce Development, the Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC), Mental Health Service Organizations, Division for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD), Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) 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 Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 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. The 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.

### Office of Behavioral Health, Department of Human Services

The Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) have maintained a formal intra-agency 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 centers, private agencies, and rehabilitation offices to eliminate duplication of services and maximize available resources. It also contains provisions for purchase of supported employment services, including transitional employment services. Such services are only purchased from vendors approved by both OBH and DVR, such as mental health centers, and community-based programs. However, the rehabilitation counselor and client are responsible for determining the appropriate services and developing the supported employment

Individualized Plan for Employment. Service providers must be registered with DVR to provide supported employment services under the DVR/OBH cooperative agreement.

Improvements have been realized in interagency planning, training, information sharing, and resolving mutual programmatic and procedural concerns. There has been ongoing cooperation at the State level between DVR and OBH. The greatest challenge facing the supported employment program has been to solidify adequate funding for the ongoing extended support services necessary to assist individuals with the most significant disabilities in maintaining community-based employment. As one way to address this, OBH has included funding for ongoing supports as part of this year's mental health contracts.

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 clients 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, identifying qualified individuals to provide extended support, 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, Workforce Centers, independent living centers, local community rehabilitation programs, mental health centers, developmental disabilities service providers, community centered boards and other available service providers, including advocates, family members and private vendors. Although supported employment depends on these informal collaborative efforts, more efforts are needed to enhance the availability of extended support services following completion of intensive supported employment services authorized under Titles I and VI, Part B of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

This last year, DVR had 16 Mental Health Supported Employment Programs around the state to provide services to participants eligible for supported employment and there will be 15 sites in the upcoming year. The process involves billing for services for individual eligible participants according to their needs. For participants living in areas where there is not an available

program, DVR will utilize vendors for the time limited services and the mental health centers have agreed to provide extended services.

A comprehensive program evaluation is scheduled to be completed on all mental health sites participating in the MH contract this year including site visits to the mental health centers as well as discussions with DVR counselors about how the program is working, what is working well and what improvements might help the program.

Division for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD), Department of Human Services

DVR and DIDD continue to work in collaboration to effectively plan and coordinate the provision of supported employment services to individuals with the most significant developmental disabilities by the DIDD community services agencies and DVR to avoid duplication of services thereby, maximizing available resources. As a result of this collaboration, much has been achieved in making community-based, integrated employment available for persons with developmental disabilities.

Within this collaborative relationship, DVR is responsible for the provision of supported employment services including, but not limited to, job coaching. However due to the expertise and proven history of DIDD in training individuals with the most significant developmental disabilities, the local DIDD community service provider is typically used by the rehabilitation counselor to provide such training and other supported employment services.

The DIDD community service provider must be registered with DVR to be able to provide supported employment services to DVR clients. Services are purchased 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. Systems have been designed to encourage local level development of supported employment strategies between all DVR field offices and DIDD supported employment service providers.

Colorado has joined the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN). SELN brings together state Developmental Disability agencies for sharing, educating and providing guidance on practices and policies around employment to its members. DVR collaborates with the Division for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities on activities with SELN and as part of this, DIDD has a staff person dedicated to spending at least fifty percent of her time focused on

employment for persons with developmental disabilities. SELN is currently conducting webinars on topics identified at last summer's roundtable meetings.

Colorado DVR partnered with the Division for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and held regional roundtables this last year to create discussions about issues faced by persons with developmental disabilities looking for competitive employment. Attendees included DVR staff, vendors, family members and Community Center Board provider staff. These roundtables included a "Benefits and Working 101" training provided by the local Social Security Work Incentives Coordinators as well as breakout sessions in which groups reviewed and discussed relevant topics such as on-going support, individual supported employment and line of sight.

There are twenty Community Center Boards (CCBs) in the State of Colorado. Community Center Boards are organizations designated in statute as the single entry point into the long-term service and support system for persons with developmental disabilities. Each Community Center Board is responsible for intake, eligibility determination, service plan development, arrangement of services, delivery of services, case management, monitoring, and other functions.

DVR continues to have four lead counselors to work specifically with individuals with developmental disabilities to help more effectively coordinate and provide quality services for these clients. These counselors serve as regional liaisons, providing training, guidance and support to all counselors in their region to establish standards of practice with the local CCB's. In addition, their duties include functioning as the expert and serving as a liaison between the CCB and the local DVR office as well as various community partners, vendors and independent contractors. These individuals will also work as a team in conjunction with the Supported Employment Program Coordinator to identify emerging trends and issues, develop new and or unique services in the community as necessary and evaluate existing programs for persons with developmental disabilities.

**ATTACHMENT 4.10**

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

**FY 2015**

## **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 three 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 spreadsheet is maintained internally within DVR by the Human Resource Specialist. It contains information on offices and regions to which staff are assigned, functional job titles, and other information about the position. Finally DVR's new electronic case management system, CO-AWARE, also contains staff information about positions to which employees are assigned. DVR uses a combination of these three data systems as well as supervisory records to continuously gather and analyze information about the qualifications of the 250.4 full time equivalencies (FTEs) assigned to DVR staff.

Currently, 132 of the 250.4 positions are vocational rehabilitation counseling positions, which include 12.5 staff who are orientation and mobility specialists or vision rehabilitation therapists. The remaining 118.4 positions consist of 33.65 administrative assistants, 11 program assistants, 2 office managers, 19 district and regional supervisors, 15.5 Business Outreach Specialists, 16 central office professional staff, 10.75 central office management staff, 2 Assistive Technology Specialists, and 8.5 Rehabilitation Technicians.

In addition to these positions, DVR also has the following federally or "other" funded program positions:

- BOND program has 1 rehabilitation counselor, .25 Supervisor and 1 central office professional staff.
- TBI Program has 1 central office management staff, 1 central office professional staff with one vacant administrative assistant staff position



- ASPIRE Program has .25 central office management staff and 2 central office professional staff

DVR continues to work to develop a business plan that outlines necessary staffing levels. At the current point in time, DVR has the following vacancies: 8.5 rehabilitation counseling positions; 2.5 administrative assistant positions, 3 Business Outreach Specialist positions, 4 program assistant positions and 3 central office professional staff positions.

The ratio of the number of vocational rehabilitation counselors to the number of clients currently being served in applicant and active statuses (02 through 24, excluding 08) is approximately 1 vocational rehabilitation counselor for every 81 clients. 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 rate of attrition of DVR staff averages about 10-12%, or approximately 25-30 staff per year. It is projected that DVR will need to recruit approximately 30 new rehabilitation counselors during the next three years. In addition, DVR anticipates the need to continue to recruit high quality support staff; approximately 10 during the next three years given the average attrition rate for the agency.

### Personnel Standards

Colorado does not have state-approved or state-recognized certification, licensing or registration requirements for many of the personnel classifications used by DVR, specifically rehabilitation counselors. In collaboration with Colorado's Department of Personnel and Administration, DVR works to ensure all counselors are fully qualified and possess an appropriate Master's level degree. DVR highly values hiring individuals who are eligible for national level certification or have prior experience working with people with disabilities.

One of the levels at which rehabilitation counselors can be recruited is the Rehabilitation Intern level. The minimum qualifications for this classification requires a Master's degree but allows for a substitution of a Bachelor's degree combined with a specific duration of work experience in

the field of serving individuals with disabilities. Once an individual is hired into this position, he or she is given a total of five years after employment to complete the necessary coursework or accrue the necessary employment experience to meet the minimum qualifications of a Rehabilitation Counselor I position. 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.

#### Minimum Counselor Qualifications

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

Graduation from an accredited college or university with a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from a program fully accredited by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE)

**OR:** Possession of a current Commission on Rehabilitation Counseling Certification credential (CRCC)

**OR:** Graduation from an accredited college or university with a Master's degree in Counseling, Psychology, Special Education, Social Work, Behavioral Science, Disability Studies or closely related human services field AND two (2) years of experience working directly with individuals who have disabilities providing services appropriate to the work assignment.

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

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, Human Services, or closely related human services field.

**Substitution:** Bachelor's Degree in a Human Services related field plus 2 (two) years of experience working directly with individuals who have disabilities.

**Condition of Employment:** Agreement to complete additional educational and work requirements within 5 years of becoming a certified state employee.

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, recruitment of individuals who fully meet the minimum qualifications of Rehabilitation Counselor I is not feasible or successful.

Historically, DVR has had a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) policy allowing for tuition assistance for individuals requiring additional training in order to meet the established qualifications. The policy required staff who did not meet the standard to develop and implement individual education plans. When necessary, 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 the CSPD requirement. Following a recent departmental review of the Division's CSPD policy, it was determined that no tuition assistance is allowable. The Division's current Rehabilitation Counselor Intern has been granted an exception to receive tuition assistance while completing the education plan already in place. This Rehabilitation Counselor Intern is expected to be fully qualified as a Rehabilitation Counselor by May 2015. Individuals hired into a Rehabilitation Counselor Intern position will still be required to complete necessary training within the established timeframes, but will not be eligible for tuition assistance.

For vocational rehabilitation counselors who will be serving large numbers of clients who are deaf, the hiring process includes an additional screening to evaluate their skills in American Sign Language communications. Orientation and mobility instructors and rehabilitation teachers also must meet the minimum qualifications established and outlined above as their technical classification within the Department's personnel system is Rehabilitation Counselor.

#### Current Status of Qualified Personnel

DVR first established a CSPD policy to require all DVR rehabilitation counselors to meet minimum qualifications in 2000. At that time, DVR established a target 5 year period by which all existing rehabilitation counselors would meet the requirement. Since attaining that target, DVR has maintained the established minimum qualifications for newly hired staff in collaboration with the Department's Division of Human Resources.

In the rare instances when DVR has had to hire an individual at the Rehabilitation Counselor Intern level, those individuals have been given five years after their training/probationary year to fully meet the qualifications for a Rehabilitation Counselor I position.

Of the 123.5 individuals currently in filled rehabilitation counselor positions within DVR (there are currently 8.5 vacant rehabilitation counseling positions), 1 individual is currently categorized as a rehabilitation intern and is working on completing her master's degree in a CORE accredited program.

#### 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 a Master's level program that prepares vocational rehabilitation counselors. Graduates of the rehabilitation counseling program possess the credentials necessary to clearly meet the minimum qualifications for a Rehabilitation Counselor I position. Faculty at UNC indicate that there are approximately 24 individuals currently enrolled in their graduate level Rehabilitation Counseling program. Six individuals graduated with Master's degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling in May, 2014 and 1 more will graduate from this program in August 2014. UNC reports they currently have about eight new students starting their program in the fall of 2014.

In addition, DVR has utilized 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, University of Wisconsin Stout and Hunter College when staff require additional training to meet CSPD standards.

DVR seeks opportunities to partner with other institutions of higher education across the state that offer Master's level degrees in counseling and counseling-related areas. Individuals obtaining this level of degree, when combined with the appropriate acceptable work experience, meet the minimum qualifications as well. One example of this includes Adams State University 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. Adams State is located in the San Luis Valley, an area of the state with a high representation of

individuals of Hispanic background, which helps to increase the availability of individuals with minority backgrounds considering employment as Rehabilitation Counselors with DVR.

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 has sent out letters of introduction to all of the universities with CORE accredited rehabilitation counseling degree programs and utilizes these contacts for recruitment on an as needed basis as positions come open. DVR also recruits using various resources such as The Summit on Program Evaluation, Emerging Leaders, TACE, and other university websites to post staff openings.

The State of Colorado continues to approve a waiver for DVR to enable the hiring of qualified counselors residing outside of the state; recent changes to personnel rules have further expanded DVR's ability to recruit for qualified professionals for other positions in offices located near the State border. This is extremely beneficial in recruiting efforts.

DVR believes that the private sector is another good resource for recruiting experienced, competent staff. Through its relationships with various professional associations for counseling and other disciplines, DVR maintains a network for recruiting vocational rehabilitation counselors who have experience in the private sector. DVR ensures availability of accommodations necessary for qualified individuals with disabilities to successfully compete for and perform their job when hired.

DVR believes strongly in being able to provide quality services to everyone who applies for vocational rehabilitation services. Consequently, DVR strives to meet the communication needs of all participants. Following is a graph comparing the current ethnic population distribution as reported by the United States (U.S.), State of Colorado, and DVR participants.

## Communication with Diverse Populations

<b>Race</b>	<b>U.S. Statistics</b>	<b>Colorado Statistics</b>	<b>DVR Statistics FFY 2012</b>
One race	97.6%	97.2%	79.8%
White	63.0%	69.6%	73.2%
Black	13.1%	4.3%	7.3%
American Indian or Alaskan	1.2%	1.6%	2.6%
Asian	5.1%	3.0%	1.3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%
Two or more	2.4%	2.8%	20.2%
Hispanic or Latino	16.9%	21.0%	15.1%

Data obtained from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/08000.html> (April 30, 2014) and from DVR reports (April 30, 2014).

At the present time, approximately 30% of DVR's field offices have one or more staff members who speak Spanish. Offices in the areas with a high Hispanic population 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. DVR also has staff members who speak a variety of other languages such as German, French, Swahili, Flemish, Dutch, Greek and Luganda.

In addition, all offices have access to translation resources. DVR also partners with the State of Colorado Division of Refugee Services and is working in close collaboration with that Division to capitalize on the knowledge, expertise and resources available to provide the best possible rehabilitation services to common clients.

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 (ASL). In the past when none of the applicants for the position of Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf 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.

There are approximately seven community-based organizations throughout Colorado that provide interpreting services as well as numerous private vendors. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides personnel or obtains services to accommodate clients in need of appropriate modes of communication. Agency staff members who have an interest are encouraged to take sign language classes. Over the last few years, DVR has assisted about 10-15 staff in taking ASL classes. Offices without staff members who can sign have local agreements with these organizations and individuals to provide interpreting services.

DVR also has the advantage of having several local colleges that provide interpreter preparation programs, such as Front Range Community College in Westminster, CO (which is in the northern part of Colorado), Pikes Peak Community College (which is in the southern part of Colorado), The MARIE Center, and Regis University. The combination of these programs is expected to sufficiently address future interpreter needs.

Every DVR office in the State has access to a telephone relay service available through Colorado's local telephone provider and those offices that serve a high number of individuals who are deaf are equipped with video relay equipment.

The capacity to provide materials in Braille is available through equipment located in some of the offices throughout the state. Additional needs are addressed through private transcribers. This has been meeting the current level of need. Many clients, at this time, prefer materials electronically, and this is accommodated routinely. Materials are also routinely made available in large print. In addition, all of the Orientation and Mobility Specialists and Vision Rehabilitation Therapists are being trained on the various uses of the iPhone and the applications that enhance accessibility. Due to the geographical nature of Colorado, there are a number of individuals who live in communities that don't have public transportation. This impacts their ability to access and to participate in VR services.

To address this issue, DVR is working on a remote training program. This is where a participant will be trained remotely by staff based out of the Denver office, primarily in the use of assistive technology. Ongoing efforts continue in the employer relations area, where DVR is working with employers to make worksites and computer systems accessible for potential and current employees who are blind/visually impaired.

### Staff Development

Colorado DVR participates in the In-Service Training Program through Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). 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, State plan hearings, any client 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 1973 Rehabilitation Act, and culturally diverse populations.

In addition to the funding associated with the In-Service Training Program, DVR allocates additional necessary funds to ensure that all training needs are met. When supervisors identify skill deficits of individual staff members, appropriate training is provided using internal resources or purchased from community providers. Furthermore, all staff have access to a variety of professional development opportunities through relevant seminars, workshops, webinars, conferences, and distance education to enhance staff skills and knowledge.

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' Foundations of Supervision, Leadership Development Seminar Series, and Leadership Book Series. Throughout 2013, DVR's succession planning efforts were augmented through funding with the Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center's (RTAC) VR Management project. Succession planning efforts continue to highlight the ongoing need



for vocational rehabilitation counseling staff to fill vacancies created through retirement and promotional opportunities.

DVR has continued to experience vacancies within middle and executive management over the past year. DVR hired a new Director during the last year, is in the process of hiring a new Deputy of Operations, and is planning for the retirement of one Regional Supervisor. Recruitment for qualified candidates, meeting the CSPD standard, will continue until all management vacancies are filled. DVR prioritizes providing appropriate training to new managers to ensure a successful transition. DVR continues to partner with Region VIII Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) for assistance in meeting these training needs, as well as taking advantage of both internal and external training resources.

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 TACE Program and DVR takes 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. The Division is currently in the process of updating several policies and business procedures to ensure compliance with Departmental requirements. These updates will provide an opportunity for all staff to receive in depth training focusing on foundational service delivery policy and business procedures in the coming year, as well as key components of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. Such training efforts focus on helping clients 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 clients 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 also takes advantage of relevant resources maintained at the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials and Region VIII TACE.

In response to needs identified in the field, DVR seeks out or develops training to ensure staff are qualified to provide high quality, effective vocational rehabilitation services to clients. Training opportunities are regularly made available on topics including specific disabilities, ethics, case management, assistive technology, assessment, job development and service delivery policies. DVR regularly reviews offerings and expands training to ensure staff needs are met. Upon hire, all counselors participate in comprehensive New Counselor Training, which includes clinical supervision, coaching from a mentor counselor, and classroom training with other new counselors. Further training is made available, as necessary and appropriate to each individual's needs, to ensure staff are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to provide vocational rehabilitation services. Professional development is provided using a variety of modalities, taking advantage of distance education whenever possible in effort to provide training opportunities efficiently as possible.

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

Comprehensive system of personnel development and in-service training activities are both organized by the Human Resource Development Specialist and Organizational Planning and Development Manager. This allows for clear coordination of professional development activities for all staff and an integration of CSPD requirements into all in-service training initiatives. All staff require opportunities for ongoing professional development which builds their skill and knowledge of a wide variety of topics including relevant legislation, research findings, rehabilitation technology, fiscal responsibilities, and leadership development. In-service training activities and objectives are often targeted toward meeting CSPD goals and ensuring a highly qualified, professional workforce.

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.

DVR counselors serving SWAP youth and the school district employees with whom they partner have also been provided copies of the new counselor training modules developed by the Region VIII TACE.

#### State Rehabilitation Council

DVR maintains a close working relationship with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and feedback from that group regarding training issues is solicited and incorporated where appropriate.

**ATTACHMENT 4.11 (a)**

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

**FY 2015**

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

### **Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) 2012-2015**

As required by CFR 361.29, every three years, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), in conjunction with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), conducts a comprehensive statewide needs assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the vocational rehabilitation needs of:

- 1) Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the need for supported employment services;
- 2) Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals who have been unserved or underserved by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation;
- 3) Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system as identified by those individuals and personnel assisting those individuals through the components of the system.

The Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation utilized a variety of methods to determine the needs of the individuals mentioned above. These methods included a) information gathered from customer satisfaction surveys, b) information gathered from public hearings and public comment, c) information gathered from the State Rehabilitation Council and d) information gathered from the triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA).

It was decided that for this CSNA, it would be important to obtain information from as many sources as possible, including DVR clients, DVR staff members, stakeholders, community partners, DVR vendors and the general public. Consequently, the following eight surveys were completed (see below). The surveys focused on gathering information about individuals' experiences with DVR, including what was working well for them and where they experienced barriers to effective relationships and service delivery.

The eight surveys included:

1. General Survey posted on DVR's website

\* This survey was posted on DVR's website so it would be available to anyone for completion (clients, family members, stakeholders, vendors, staff, community partners, etc.) An email was sent to 163 partners and stakeholders with the link to complete the survey. In addition, postcards were printed and put in all DVR offices across the state so visitors to these offices would also have an opportunity to provide feedback. The hope with this survey was to obtain feedback from as many types of people that interact with DVR as possible (clients, parents/family members, providers, stakeholders, employers, etc.) about what is working well within Colorado DVR, what areas need attention, what areas there may be gaps in, and to find out if there were emerging issues that needed attention. The survey was open for completion for three weeks and 119 people completed it.

2. General Client Satisfaction Survey

\* This survey was sent to a) all clients with email addresses in our system (5,214) and b) to a random sample of 1,000 clients via their mailing/home addresses for a total of 6,214 surveys sent. The purpose of the general client satisfaction survey was to target clients with open cases with DVR to ask how DVR is doing, to find out what is working well, what areas we could make improvements in, and if there were services that were not being provided that were needed. DVR planned to use the information obtained in setting goals and priorities for the upcoming years to improve the services we provide. The survey was open for completion for two weeks and there were 891 responses for a response rate of 14.3%.

3. Clients Seeking Employment Survey

\* This survey was sent to a) 477 clients via their email addresses and b) 543 clients via their mailing addresses for a total of 1,020. The purpose of this survey was to seek information from clients actively looking for work to find out what has been helpful to them in their job search, how we might improve services to help them obtain employment and to find out if there are areas of service that we are missing that need to be addressed. The goal was to determine if there are

strategies to help improve or increase the quality and number of successful employment outcomes DVR clients. The survey was open for completion for two weeks and there were 104 responses for a response rate of 10.19%.

#### 4. All DVR Staff Survey

\* This survey was sent to all DVR staff via email. The purpose of this survey was to obtain information from staff about what is working well, what they are struggling with, how we could improve services, how we could be more effective in providing services, what areas we may need to provide more training in, etc. We hope to use the information received to help us set our goals and priorities for the upcoming years to help us improve the services we provide. The survey was open for completion for two weeks. The survey was emailed to 243 staff and 140 responded, equaling a response rate of 57.6%.

#### 5. High Production/High Quality Counselors' Survey

\* This survey was sent to counselors identified with consistently high production/high quality casework over the last three to five years. The purpose of this survey was to ask questions of these staff to determine if there are patterns, tips, techniques, etc. that are consistently being done that assist the counselor in obtaining successful outcomes so that these tips, techniques, etc. could be shared with other staff or so that training could be developed for staff to help others increase their performance. The survey was sent to 37 staff and 25 responded for a response rate of 67.5%.

#### 6. School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) Survey

\* This survey was sent to 90 SWAP staff. The purpose of the SWAP survey was ask our SWAP partners to provide us feedback about how the partnership is going, what seems to be working well, what might we be able to do to improve services to SWAP youth, etc. The survey was open for completion for two weeks and there were 65 responses for a response rate of 72.2%.

#### 7. General Vendor Survey

\* This survey was sent to all vendors with email addresses in our system (3,674). The purpose of this survey was to obtain information about vendor satisfaction, barriers to working with DVR, how to improve vendor relationships and how to

improve services provided to DVR clients. The survey was open for completion for two weeks and there were 390 responses for a response rate of 10.62%.

#### 8. Placement Vendor Survey

\* This survey was sent to a) 216 vendors with email addresses and b) 620 vendors via their mailing address. The purpose of the placement vendor survey was to find out if there are ways to improve quality employment outcomes for clients and to improve number and quality of placement providers by finding out what is working well in these partnerships, what barriers might exist, and what changes could be made to improve working relationships. The survey was open for completion for two weeks and there were 37 responses for a response rate of 4.4%

Data collection included a multi-method approach with surveys provided in paper and electronic formats, as well as other alternative methods. Each survey was distributed in the manner in which it was thought would capture the most feedback from each particular source. Following is a table of all surveys sent.

Survey	Date sent	Date closed	# sent out by mail	# sent out by email	# provided to DVR offices	# responses	% Return rate
SWAP	3/7/2012	3/23/2012	0	90	0	65	72.20%
All DVR staff	3/8/2012	3/28/2012	0	243	0	140	57.60%
High production/ high quality counselors	3/8/2012	3/28/2012	0	37	0	25	67.50%
General Website	3/8/2012	3/30/2012	25 SRC	138	50 per office	119	



Survey	Date sent	Date closed	# sent out by mail	# sent out by email	# provided to DVR offices	# responses	% Return rate
Clients looking for work	3/12/2012	3/30/2012	543	477	0	104	10.19%
General Client Satisfaction	3/21/2012	4/6/2012	1000	5214	0	891	14.30%
Placement vendors	3/12/2012	3/30/2012	620	216	0	37	4.40%
All vendors	3/12/2012	3/30/2012	0	3674	0	390	10.62%

The information from the surveys was analyzed and presented to DVR's State Rehabilitation Council and the Rehabilitation Leadership Team, who in turn provided, discussed and strategized the application of the feedback with all Regional and District supervisors within DVR. The results were ultimately shared with all DVR staff. In addition, survey results were shared with Dr. Scott Sabella, TACE Region VIII Center Director and Mr. Robert Jahner, TACE Region VIII Technical Assistance Advisor, who also provided input and feedback.

Examination of the survey responses indicated multiple areas that all parties' surveyed (clients, vendors, family members, stakeholders and community partners, DVR staff, etc.) saw as concerns, leading to some common themes across all surveys.

**Common themes found across surveys point to the following needs:**

- Hire more staff/decrease caseload size,
- Increase client motivation/responsibility towards employment search
- Need for timelier movement through the process
- Need for increased communication/follow up
- Improve use of comprehensive assessment process to reach strong employment goal
- Increase education of and outreach to employers

Examination of responses also highlighted to DVR current issues clients are facing in which they need additional assistance or resources. The emerging needs for clients are identified as follows:

**Emerging needs of clients:**

- Overcoming the barrier of finding employment in an economic downturn
- Job placement/development services assistance
- Education and training
- Opportunities for persons with disabilities to accumulate work experience
- Employer and public education about the ability of persons with disabilities
- Overcoming health and functional limitation barriers such as work tolerance, stamina, etc.
- Transportation
- Client skills development
- Counseling/therapy services
- Benefits assistance, understanding of benefits, and access to or referral to benefits planner
- Providers, lack of providers or provider support
- Motivation of clients, readiness for work

In addition, survey responses also highlighted areas of need for the DVR agency. Concerns were indicated in the following areas as topics that DVR needs to look at internally in order to improve services provided to its clients and are indicated as:

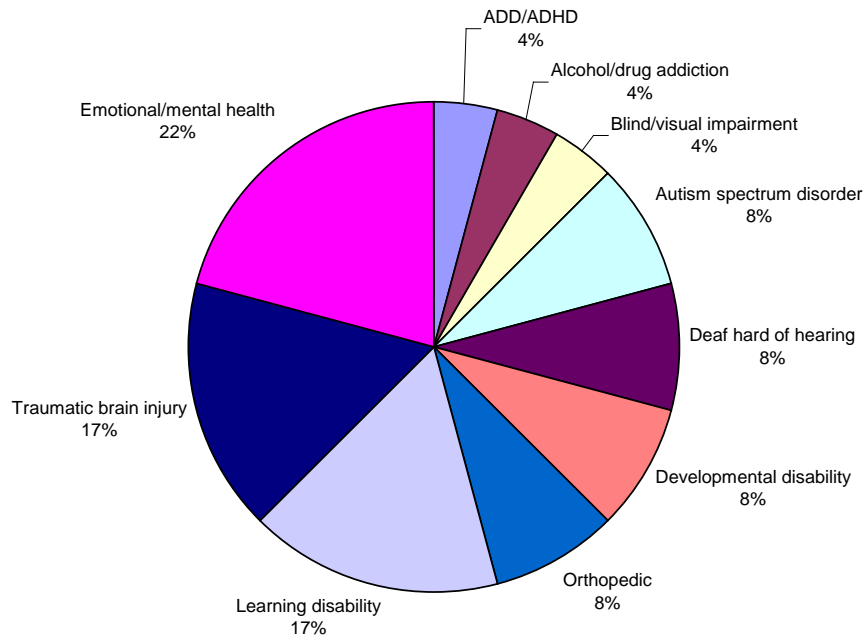
**Emerging needs for the agency:**

- Timeliness
- Communication with clients, client contact
- Customer service
- Improvement in partner collaboration
- Streamlining of vocational rehabilitation process
- Caseload/work sizes

Several questions were asked in more than one survey in attempt to get perspective from all parties who interact with DVR. Following are eight graphs that indicate overall results from these questions across all surveys.

One question asked of clients or those persons working closely with clients, such as family members, counselors and service providers was what the client's primary disability was. Answers to this question were as follows:

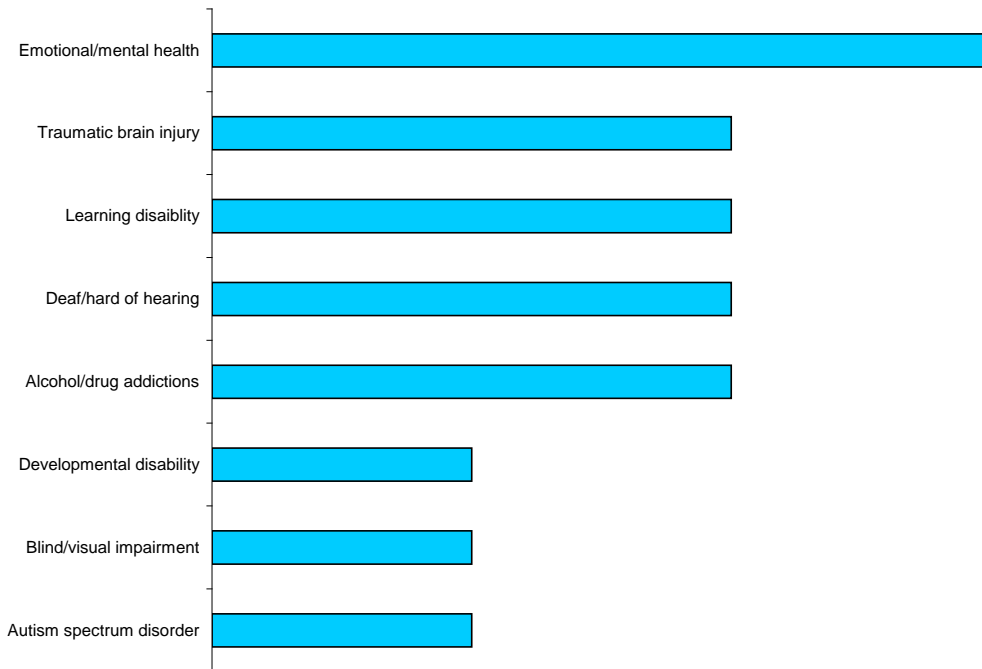
### Consumer's primary disability



This information shows what areas the people DVR serves feel is their main disabling condition.

DVR also asked in various surveys which disability respondents felt makes it most difficult to get and keep a job, with the results as follows:

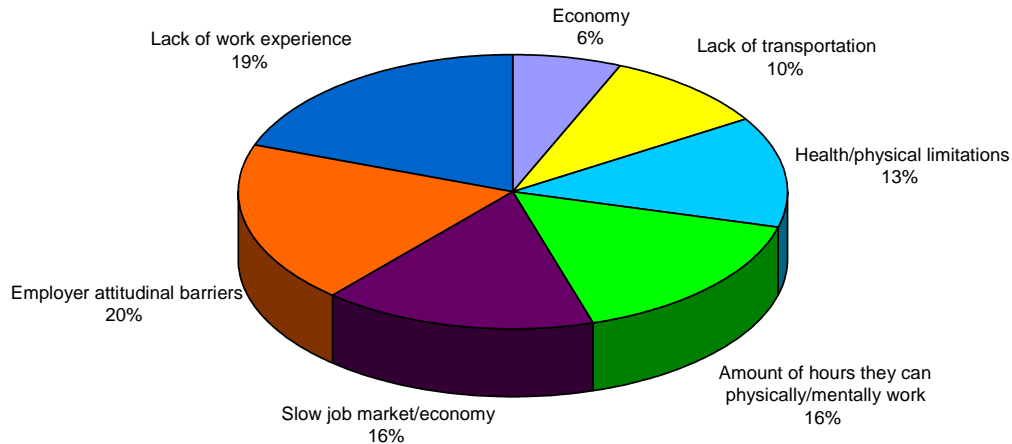
### Disability that makes it most difficult to get/keep a job



This question was asked to determine which areas people see as biggest areas of concern, in order to then determine which disabilities staff may need to be more educated about when discussing employment goals and barriers to employment with clients, as well as speaking about accommodations with clients and/or employers.

In order to address issues facing our clients when looking for work, several surveys asked respondents to indicate out of a list of ten to seventeen factors, what they thought the five top barriers were to people with disabilities in getting and keeping a job. Following are the overall seven highest answers indicated from respondents across all surveys:

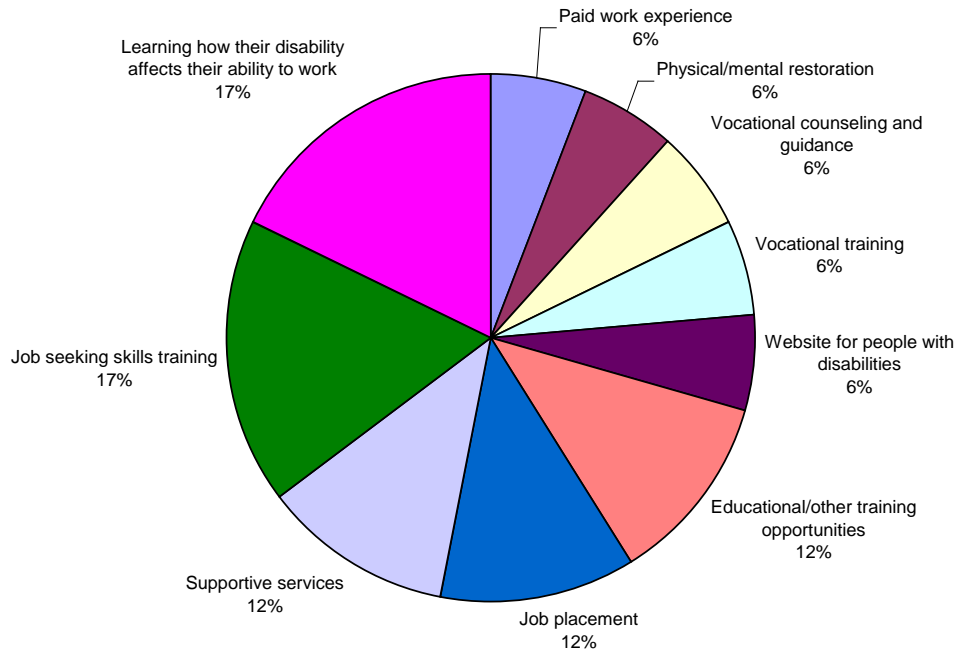
## Top Barriers to Employment



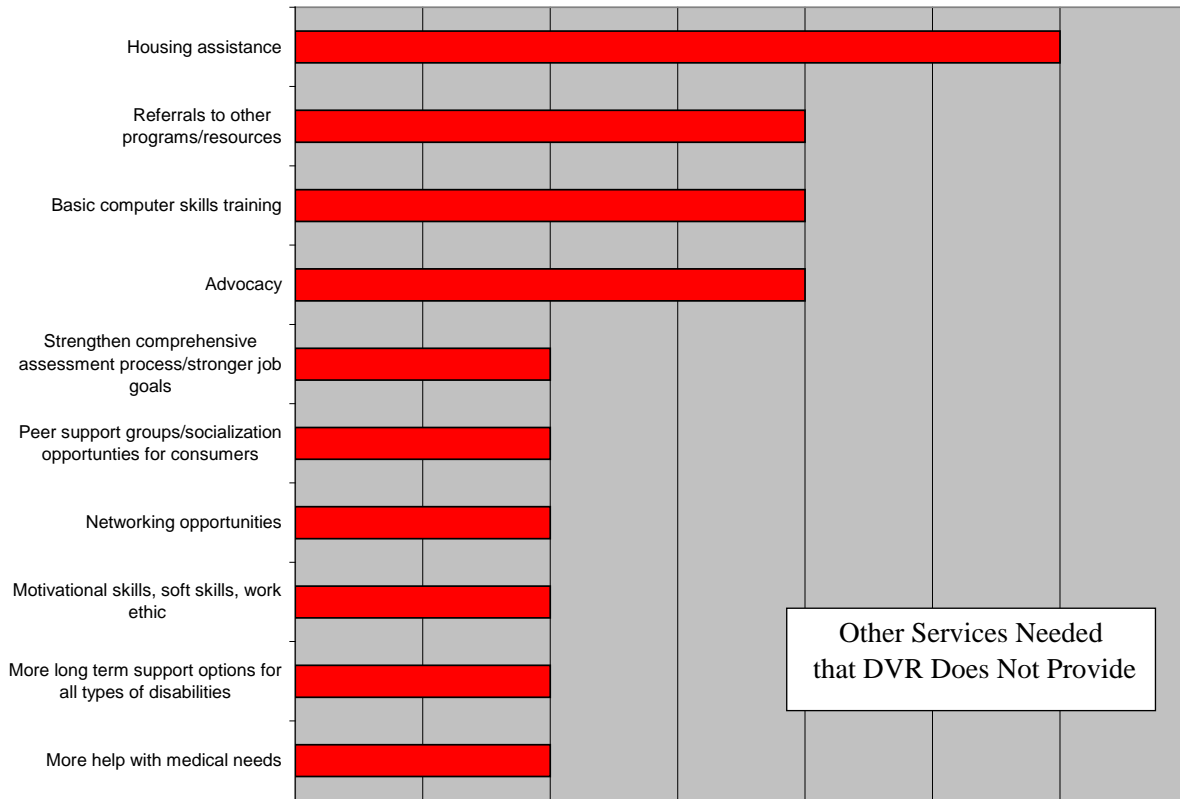
This information assists DVR with planning in regards to areas counselors may need to pay closer attention to when developing plans with clients. It will be important to be thorough in asking questions with each individual to address all areas of concern to ensure increased potential for successful employment outcomes.

To ensure thoroughness in provision of DVR services, a question was asked of respondents about what other services they felt clients could benefit from. Response choices included services DVR can pay for as well as various referral services, other services and an option to write in answers. The top ten responses were:

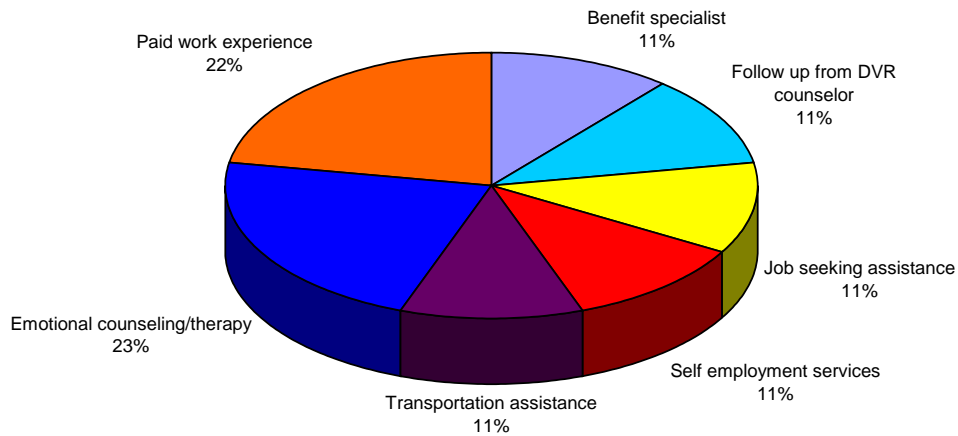
## Other Services Consumers Could Benefit From



A similar question asked was targeted at trying to find out if those surveyed felt there are additional services that persons with disabilities need to become successfully employed that DVR does not currently provide but would be beneficial. Responses were interesting in that numerous responses that were written in were actually services that DVR does currently provide or that are available, leading DVR to conclude that further education of available services is needed.

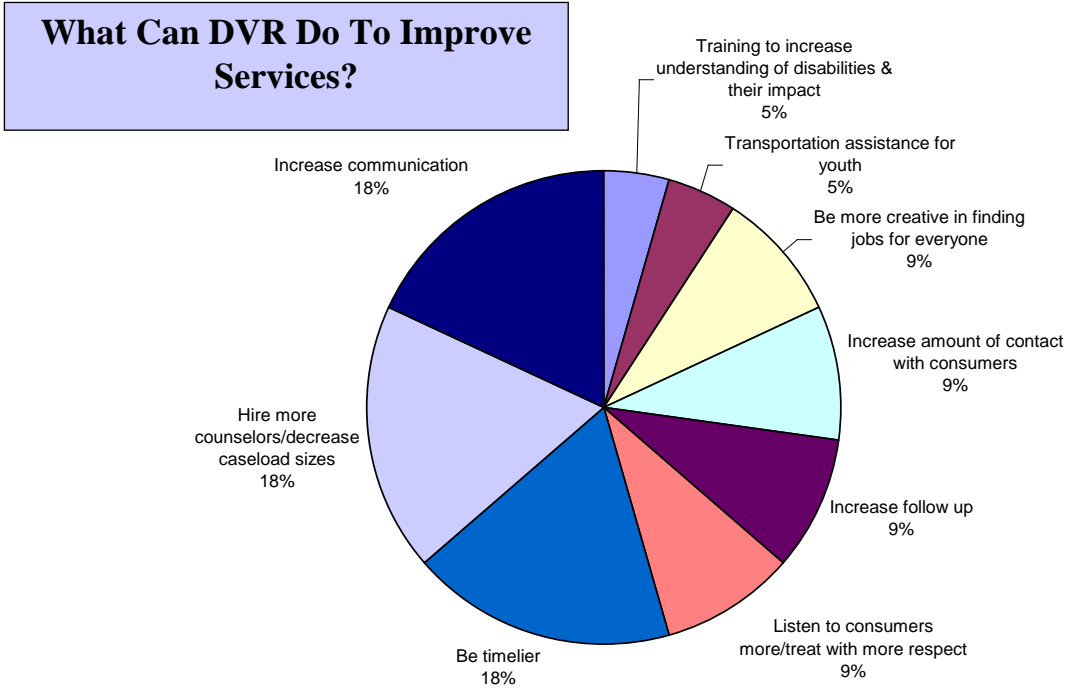


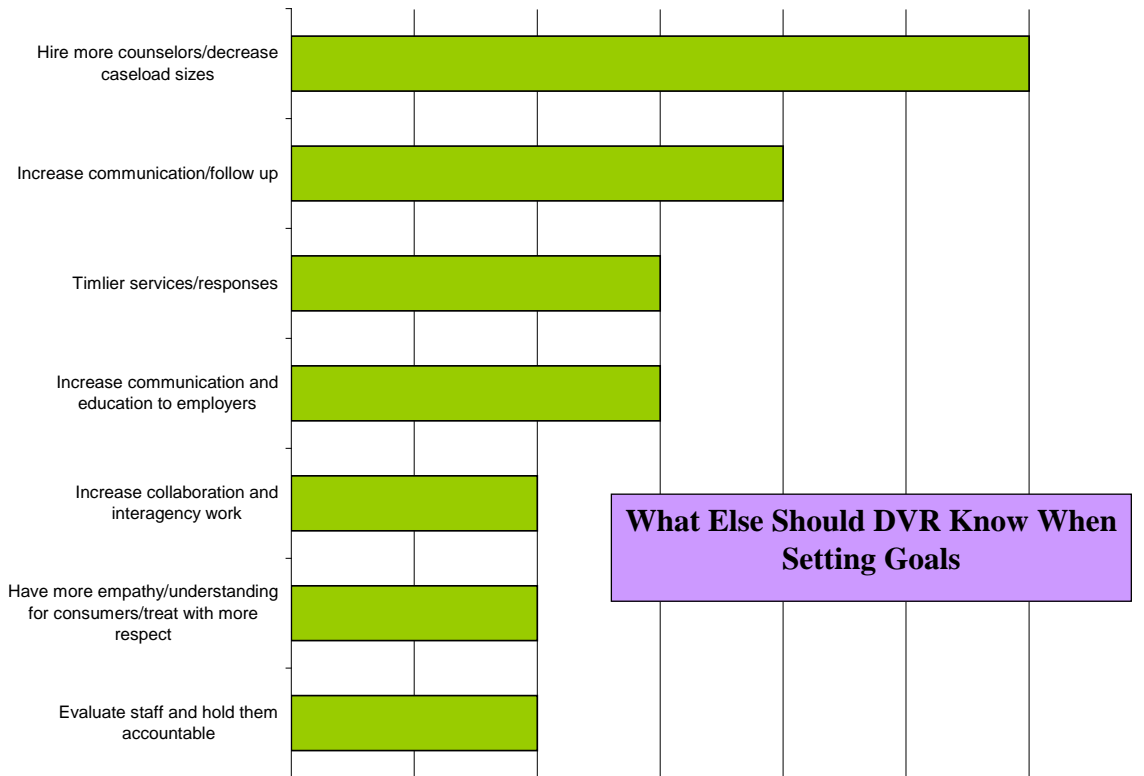
**Services Respondents Thought DVR Didn't Provide, But Does**





Two of the final questions asked across all surveys were aimed at finding out what more DVR could do to improve their services and what else DVR should know or consider when setting future goals.





Although information gleaned from all sources and all surveys was used when determining the State's Goals and Priorities, close attention was given to these common themes found across surveys as this is information that was consistently provided by all types of persons that interact with DVR and consequently was deemed as high priority.

**Service needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services:**

- \* Continued focus on increasing supported employment services and on-going/long-term supports
- \* Need to look at fee/pay structure for vendors providing supported employment services
- \* Need for supported employment options for clients other than those with mental health and DD
- \* Need for increased work experience opportunities
- \* Need for more employer education/Disability Awareness Training
- \* Mental health counseling/therapy
- \* More effective job placement services; improved placement services from vendors

**Service needs of individuals with disabilities who are minorities:**

- \* General customer satisfaction survey indicated of the 891 respondents, 191 self-reported as minorities
- \* Indicated similar needs overall, but there were five areas that minorities saw as bigger barriers to employment than non-minorities:
  - disability benefits,
  - lack of available rehabilitation services
  - lack of transportation
  - lack of qualified service providers
  - lack of adequate/stable housing
- \* Cultural sensitivity

**Service needs of individuals with disabilities who have been un-served or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program:**

- \* Populations identified as un-served or underserved include
  - Asian/Hispanic populations were identified as minority populations most underserved by Colorado DVR
  - Services for persons who are homeless
  - Services for transitioning youth age 14-16
  - Clients on the wait list
- \* Most needed rehab services indicated include:
  - job placement
  - job seeking skills training
  - adjustment training
  - job coaching
  - supportive services
  - assistance with vocational goal selection
- \* Other services or needs indicated were:
  - advocacy/advocacy training
  - learning how disability affects work

**Service needs of individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system**

- \* Collaboration between placement/employment entities in regards to employer outreach, education and placement
- \* Increase in “work ready” referrals
- \* Disability Awareness Training for employers
- \* Improved communication between agencies
- \* All survey results indicated need for increased communication, improved customer service, increased collaboration, referral for other services, advocacy, and improved vocational counseling and guidance.

**Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) within the state:**

- \* Need to improve inter-agency communication and collaboration
- \* Training for CRP staff to make better referrals
- \* Expanded supported employment services offered to wider range of disabilities
- \* Need for transition services to start at an earlier age with more pre-vocational services offered
- \* Need for better training and funding for staff who serve individuals with the most significant disabilities

**CONCLUSION**

Although information gleaned from all sources and all surveys was used when determining the State's Goals and Priorities, close attention was given to the common themes found across surveys as this is information that was consistently provided by all types of persons that interact with DVR and consequently was deemed as high priority. As a result from this assessment, as well as other reports and public comment, DVR and SRC have worked to develop goals accordingly (see Attachment 4.11(c)(1)). In addition, SRC has provided recommendations to DVR related to identified needs and DVR has addressed these recommendations in Attachment 4.2(c). DVR will direct their attention toward remediation of these concerns.

**ATTACHMENT 4.11 (b)**

Annual Estimates of Individuals to Be Served and Costs of Services

**FY 2015**

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

On April 22, 2013, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) implemented a full wait list under Order of Selection, whereby eligible individuals receive vocational rehabilitation services based on their priority classification. A wait list for all priority classifications was implemented and DVR counselors were only serving those clients already in an approved Individualized Plan for Employment. DVR has been working diligently to remove clients from the wait list in as timely a manner as possible. DVR removed 500 clients with most significant disabilities from the wait list on February 24, 2014 and 1,004 clients on April 17, 2014. It is DVR's intention that as resources become available, individuals will continue to be taken off the wait list and provided vocational rehabilitation services based on their original date of application. Individuals with more significant disability classifications will be served before individuals with less significant disability classifications. DVR's leadership team continues to monitor the budget to determine how best to provide ongoing services to DVR clients and to devise a plan for how best to open categories on the wait list.

The following charts show the projected numbers of individuals DVR anticipates serving in FFY 2015 and the numbers of individuals anticipated to receive eligibility determinations in FFY 2015.

**INDIVIDUALS SERVED AND THE COST OF SERVICES BY PRIORITY CATEGORY\***

**Projected October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015**

	<b>Individuals Served</b>	<b>Cost of Services</b>
Individuals with most significant disabilities	10,751	\$4,815,603
Individuals with significant disabilities	3,855	\$2,174,301
Individuals with least significant disabilities	559	\$184,299
<b>TOTALS</b>	15,165	\$ 7,174,203

\*The above numbers do not include the funds paid for DVR's SWAP program.

**NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES  
BY PRIORITY CATEGORY**

**Projected October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015**

	<b>Eligible Individuals</b>	<b>Cost of Services for Eligible Individuals</b>
Individuals with most significant disabilities	3,761	\$385,392
Individuals with significant disabilities	1,169	\$57,378
Individuals with least significant disabilities	179	\$8,477
<b>TOTALS</b>	5,109	\$451,247

## **Title I and Title VI-B Funds**

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 uses both Title VI-B funds and Title I funds for this purpose.

When Title VI-B funds are not available or have been exhausted, DVR uses Title I funds to assure that supported employment services are not interrupted. 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.

DVR provided supported employment services to 745 clients over the last fiscal year and expended \$1,370,536.04 for these services. This figures represents \$373,925 Title VI-B funds and an additional \$996,611.04 Title I funds expended to serve clients with supported employment needs.

- Total number of individuals to be served using Title VI-B funds for supported employment – 745
- Total cost of services for individuals to be served using Title VI-B funds for supported employment - \$1,370,536.04



## **Individuals to Be Served and the Cost of Services by Priority Category\***

Projected October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015

- Number of individuals with most significant disabilities to be served – 10,751
- Cost of services for individuals with most significant disabilities to be served – \$4,815,603
- Number of individuals with significant disabilities to be served – 3,855
- Cost of services for individuals with significant disabilities to be served – \$2,174,301
- Number of individuals with least significant disabilities to be served – 559
- Cost of services for individuals with least significant disabilities to be served – \$184,299
- Total number of individuals to be served – 15,165
- Total cost of services for individuals to be served – \$7,174,203\*

\*These figures do not include the funds paid for DVR's SWAP program.

## **Number of Individuals Who Will Be Eligible For Services by Priority Category**

Projected October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015

- Number of eligible individuals with most significant disabilities – 3,761
- Cost of services for eligible individuals with most significant disabilities – \$ 385,392
- Number of eligible individuals with significant disabilities – 1,169
- Cost of services for eligible individuals with significant disabilities – \$57,378
- Number of eligible individuals with least significant disabilities – 179
- Cost of services for eligible individuals with least significant disabilities – \$8,477
- Total number of eligible individuals – 5,109
- Total cost of services for eligible individuals – \$451,247

**ATTACHMENT 4.11 (C)(1)**

State's Goals and Priorities

**FY 2015**

The following goals were developed and approved through on-going discussions with SRC at their meetings and via email communication. These goals are based on results of the 2013-2015 triennial CSNA results, comment from the 2014 public hearings, and discussions with DVR's senior leadership team.

## **GOAL #1 - DVR WILL PROVIDE EXCELLENT GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING TO DVR CLIENTS.**

### Strategies:

- DVR will have 30 day contact with all clients to increase client engagement and enhance the client-counselor partnership.
- DVR will improve case file documentation reflecting personalized and meaningful contact with clients.
- DVR supervisors will meet regularly with counselors and staff to model excellent guidance and counseling skills as well as motivational interviewing so that counselors and staff can in turn use these skills with clients.
- DVR will explore training options to improve consistent and excellent client service to all clients, focusing on methods for dealing with difficult situations and creating welcoming client focused environments in all DVR locations.

## **GOAL #2 – DVR WILL BUILD PUBLIC TRUST BY DEMONSTRATING STEWARDSHIP, SOUND OPERATIONAL PRACTICES AND POSITIVE INTERNAL DYNAMICS.**

### Strategies:

- DVR will implement new procedures for external job placement vendors that will establish reasonable timelines for services and a greater focus on successful closures.
- DVR will generate, monitor and use information to make sound fiscal decisions to ensure the ability to provide effective individualized services to clients.
- DVR will utilize the Waitlist Management process to project and manage the removal of clients from the waitlist effectively and efficiently.

- DVR will invest resources as available to improve the data collection and reporting capabilities of its electronic case management system and other mechanisms to enable management to make data driven decisions and better gauge program performance.

**GOAL #3 – DVR WILL ENGAGE IN EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS, TEAMWORK AND COLLABORATION.**

Strategies:

- The DVR Business Outreach Program will increase business partnerships with Federal contractors for the purposes of employment.
- DVR will outreach to other state agencies, state departments, other VR agencies, and other entities regarding best practices and ways to work more efficiently and effectively together.

**ATTACHMENT 4.11 (c)(3)**

Order of Selection

**FY 2015**

## Order of Selection

The Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) implemented an Order of Selection on March 1, 1993 in anticipation of projected economic and funding difficulties, to ensure DVR's ability to manage limited funds, and to guarantee continuity and fairness in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to persons eligible for VR services. This action resulted from increased costs for vocational rehabilitation services, increased demand for services, and increased numbers of applicants with significant disabilities. Since Order of Selection was implemented, DVR has had to restrict services four times.

In accordance with Section 101(a)(5)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the 1998 Workforce Investment Act, DVR has designated that individuals with disabilities will receive vocational rehabilitation services in the following order of priority:

FIRST: Eligible individuals with most significant disabilities

SECOND: Eligible individuals with significant disabilities

THIRD: Eligible individuals with a disability that does not meet the criteria of Most Significant Disability or Significant Disability.

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

### 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 severe impairment(s) in order to attain an employment outcome, and

- It will take a minimum of **five (5) months** to complete the services.

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 **two or fewer** 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.

On April 22, 2013, DVR implemented a full wait list under Order of Selection, whereby eligible individuals receive vocational rehabilitation services based on their priority classification. A wait list for all priority classifications was implemented and Colorado DVR counselors were only serving those clients already in an approved Individualized Plan for Employment. DVR has been working diligently to remove clients from the wait list in as timely a manner as possible. DVR removed 500 clients with most significant disabilities from the wait list on February 24, 2014 and 1,004 clients on April 17, 2014.

**Service and Outcome Goals**

DVR recognizes the need for fiscal responsibility and planning in order to be able to serve clients in an on-going manner and has developed tools to help estimate timeframes to serve the three disability severity categories, including monitoring financial resources and available funds, attrition rates, staffing levels and future Individualized Plan for Employment options. The timeframes to release individuals will vary depending on these criteria. DVR has increased emphasis on monitoring case costs and will monitor the budget on a monthly basis and make adjustments, as needed, to determine the appropriate number of individuals that can be removed from the wait list and ensure sufficient fiscal and personnel resources are available. It is DVR's intention that as resources become available, individuals will continue to be taken off the wait list and provided



vocational rehabilitation services based on their original date of application. Individuals with more significant disability classifications will be served before individuals with less significant disability classifications. DVR will continue to work diligently to identify and utilize effective mechanisms for tracking and projecting encumbrances and expenditures in a way that will allow the Division to effectively manage Order of Selection to provide ongoing services to DVR clients and to devise a plan for how best to open categories.

As of June 5, 2014, there were a total of 5,475 clients on the wait list. Of that, 3,689 were in the most significant category, 1,550 were in the significant category, and 236 were in the disability category. After completing a significant review and analysis of historical data, considering new applications and attrition rates, DVR estimates that approximately 5,302 clients will be on the list by the end of FFY 2014.

For FFY 2015, we will continue to take individuals off the wait list from the most significant category. It is estimated that the 3,607 individuals currently in plan (as of June 5, 2014) will continue to receive services. DVR estimates, based on historical data, 160 individuals will exit the program each month with successful employment outcomes and approximately 465 individuals will exit the program each month for other reasons. Beginning on October 2013, for the purpose of ensuring consistent quality casework, Colorado DVR began a thorough comprehensive review of all open cases. Additionally, DVR has established guidelines focusing on client engagement. As a result of this, several attempts were made to contact all clients to determine who was still interested in receiving services. DVR believes this has been a major factor why a significant number of cases have been closed for other reasons. This process has allowed DVR to focus on current open cases that are reflective of clients who are thoroughly engaged in the DVR process.

Priority Category	# of Individuals to be Served	Estimated number of individuals who will exit with employment after receiving services	Estimated number of individuals who will exit without employment after receiving services	Time within which goals are to be achieved	Cost of Services
Most significant	10,751	1170	1854	2-5 Years	\$4,815,603
Significant	3,855	695	821	1-3 Years	\$2,174,301
Other	559	114	87	0-2 Years	\$184,299

**ATTACHMENT 4.11 (c)(4)**

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

**FY 2015**

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

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) will continue to expend 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 6.3 of the State plan.)

DVR's administrative priority is to assure the provision of supported employment services to all who need it. DVR's new electronic case management system provides the utility to ensure that Title VI-B funding is the primary source of payment for supported employment services until that funding is exhausted, at which point funding continues to be provided through Title I.

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 clients with intellectual and 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.

DVR continues to work actively within the realm of education 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.

## Wellness and Recovery for Thousands through Employment and Education (WRKE)

The Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) was awarded a five year grant in the fall of 2010 by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) to provide evidence based supported employment and education to participants of the Mental Health Center of Denver, Jefferson Mental Health, and Mental Health Partners serving Boulder and Broomfield Counties. The programs serve transition age youth and adults jointly with local DVR counselors in these areas. Job seeking skills, job placement, and job coaching are provided through the grant at no additional charge to DVR. The Omni Institute is conducting an ongoing assessment of the program.

DVR uses its Title VI-B funds for 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. 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. The activities to be conducted during 2014 reflect a continuation and refinement of activities performed over the last several years.

The Office of Behavioral Health applied for, and with DVR's support, was accepted into the Johnson and Johnson-Dartmouth Community Mental Health Program. This program includes \$380,000 to fund an Individual Placement and Support Trainer for four years. Training will be available to DVR staff as well as Community Mental Health Center Employment Specialists.

**ATTACHMENT 4.11 (d)**

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

**FY 2015**

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

Expanding and improving services remains an agency priority as Colorado DVR strives to provide the best possible services to its individuals with disabilities. Colorado DVR engages in an on-going planning process using information obtained from the comprehensive statewide needs assessment, data analysis, SRC recommendations, feedback obtained from public comment, standards and indicators, etc. The quality assurance reviews and program evaluation activities further assess the effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services.

DVR engages with a wide range of stakeholders in the community in order to expand and improve services, including clients, family members, both public and private agencies, community rehabilitation programs, education partners, independent living centers, employers, and service providers. Input from stakeholders increases DVR's knowledge of client needs and emerging issues, helping DVR prioritize goals to move forward in ways most likely to increase the rehabilitation experience of and successful employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

The sections below will describe in detail methods and strategies to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities in Colorado.

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

- DVR has two dedicated staff positions (Assistive Technology Coordinator and Assistive Technology Specialist) within our Statewide PAT (Personal Adjustment Training) Unit to provide assistive technology services to clients. The Assistive Technology Specialist works with individuals with blindness or low vision within DVR's center-based program; however, referrals are accepted from clients with other disabilities as well. The Assistive Technology Coordinator works primarily to provide assistance, support, and services on a statewide level to DVR clients and teachers in the PAT Unit.

- Outside of the center-based program, there are 8 additional teachers who work with clients to provide assistive technology training. While the field teachers do not provide assistive technology on a full-time basis, they assess and provide training in this area as part of the individual's DVR program.
- In addition to DVR's internal staff, DVR has numerous statewide vendors that we are able to purchase assistive technology related services from, including but not limited to assistive technology evaluations, ergonomic evaluations, assistive technology devices, etc.

***Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities; and what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.***

- DVR believes strongly in being able to provide quality services to everyone who applies for vocational rehabilitation services. In addition, DVR strives to meet the communication needs of all participants. Following is a graph comparing the current ethnic population distribution as reported by the United States (U.S.), State of Colorado, and DVR participants.

Communication with Diverse Populations

Race	U.S. Statistics	Colorado Statistics	DVR Statistics FFY 2013
One race	97.6%	97.2%	79.8%
White	63.0%	69.6%	73.2%
Black	13.1%	4.3%	7.3%
American Indian or Alaskan	1.2%	1.6%	2.6%
Asian	5.1%	3.0%	1.3%



Race	U.S. Statistics	Colorado Statistics	DVR Statistics FFY 2013
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%
Two or more	2.4%	2.8%	20.2%
Hispanic or Latino	16.9%	21.0%	15.1%

Data obtained from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/08000.html> (April 30, 2014) and from DVR reports (April 30, 2014).

DVR recognizes from the above statistics that compared to the general Colorado population we are underserving the Asian and Hispanic or Latino populations. DVR has begun to identify methods to outreach to these individuals to educate them about DVR to ensure they are able to access services if needed.

DVR staff also serve on various community boards, councils and committees. This involvement allows for ongoing outreach to diverse populations as well as provision of information to a wider range of populations. This increases awareness to a larger number of individuals with most significant disabilities who are minorities. DVR has served a higher population of minorities this year than last year, possibly as a result of greater outreach efforts.

DVR's Goal #3 states "DVR will engage in effective partnerships, teamwork and collaboration". All staff are encouraged to complete outreach activities and educate the public about DVR services. Outreach activities occur with Colorado's corrections systems, workforce centers, schools, mental health centers, the Veterans Administration, homeless programs, and more. In addition, DVR has invited staff from the 121 program to attend and be part of DVR's new counselor trainings.

***If applicable, identify plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the state.***

Colorado DVR has an established vendor committee that works to effectively determine rates and standards for goods and services that vendors provide to address vendor related concerns

and to improve the overall quality of vendors. DVR staff across the state continually work to recruit new qualified vendors to increase client choice of service providers. DVR's vendor committee, in collaboration with the Operations Support Unit has implemented a code of ethics for vendors, and is exploring the options of a vendor portal and electronic fund transfer payment for vendors.

***Describe strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators.***

Colorado DVR typically passes most standards and indicators and passed six of the seven Indicators in FFY 2013. The only Indicator DVR did not pass in FFY 2013 was Indicator 1.5 due to the extremely high average hourly wage in Colorado. DVR is currently struggling with Indicators 1.1 as a result of having to implement a full wait list in April 2013. In order to remove clients from the wait list while also paying attention to fiscal responsibilities, DVR has implemented a waitlist management protocol that includes tools to help estimate timeframes to serve the three disability severity categories, including monitoring financial resources and available funds, attrition, staffing levels and future Individualized Plan for Employment options.

In addition, Colorado DVR is also currently struggling with Indicator 1.2. As stated in Attachment 4.11(c)(3), beginning on October 2013, for the purpose of ensuring consistent quality casework, Colorado DVR began a thorough comprehensive review of all open cases. Additionally, DVR has established guidelines focusing on client engagement. As a result of this, several attempts were made to contact all clients to determine who was still interested in receiving services. DVR believes this has been a major factor why a significant number of cases have been closed for other reasons. This process has allowed DVR to focus on current open cases that are reflective of clients who are thoroughly engaged in the DVR process.

To further stress the importance of improving the standard and performance indicators, DVR has dedicated state plan goals focused on improvement with respect to these standards (See below for more detail). In addition, all DVR staff have employment outcome goals as a measurable core competency as part of their performance plans.

***Describe strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.***

DVR staff work closely with workforce staff around the state. DVR staff serve as members on various workforce boards and they participate on various committees and councils through the workforce center such as youth councils, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) committees, as well as working collaboratively with workforce centers to host job fairs for youth, job fairs for seniors, etc. DVR is also co-located with several workforce centers throughout the state, such as the offices in Golden, Frisco, Edwards and Salida. This arrangement lends itself to collaborative partnering for people with disabilities seeking employment. DVR staff are available to consult with workforce center staff about accommodation needs, accessibility and rehabilitation technology.

***Describe how the agency's strategies will be used to:***

- achieve goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1);***
- support innovation and expansion activities; and***
- 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 2015 Update - Strategies to Address Needs in the Comprehensive Assessment and to Achieve Identified Goals and Priorities

DVR believes strongly in the content of the state plan and obtained input from all levels of DVR staff including administration, field services supervisors, rehabilitation counselors, and support staff. In addition, with a new dedicated position to the state plan, DVR plans to provide education and outreach to all DVR staff about the goals, priorities and strategies. The goals and strategies are based on the results of the 2013-2015 Triennial Assessment, recommendations from the State Rehabilitation Council, public input, federal standards and indicators, and ongoing work with DVR's management team.

**Goal #1- DVR will provide excellent guidance and counseling to DVR clients.**

Strategies:

- DVR will have 30 day contact with all clients to increase client engagement and enhance the client-counselor partnership.
- DVR will improve case file documentation reflecting personalized and meaningful contact with clients.
- DVR supervisors will meet regularly with counselors and staff to model excellent guidance and counseling skills as well as motivational interviewing so that counselors and staff can in turn use these skills with clients.
- DVR will explore training options to improve consistent and excellent client service to all clients, focusing on methods for dealing with difficult situations and creating welcoming client focused environments in all DVR locations.

**Goal #2 – DVR will build public trust by demonstrating stewardship, sound operational practices and positive internal dynamics.**

Strategies:

- DVR will implement new procedures for external job placement vendors that will establish reasonable timelines for services and a greater focus on successful closures.

- DVR will generate, monitor and use information to make sound fiscal decisions to ensure the ability to provide effective individualized services to clients.
- DVR will utilize the Waitlist Management process to project and manage the removal of clients from the waitlist effectively and efficiently.
- DVR will invest resources as available to improve the data collection and reporting capabilities of its electronic case management system and other mechanisms to enable management to make data driven decisions and better gauge program performance.

Goal #3 – DVR will engage in effective partnerships, teamwork and collaboration.

Strategies:

- The DVR Business Outreach Program will increase business partnerships with Federal contractors for the purposes of employment.
- DVR will outreach to other state agencies, state departments, other VR agencies, and other entities regarding best practices and ways to work more efficiently and effectively together.

**ATTACHMENT 4.11 (e)(2)**

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

**FY 2015**

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

Throughout FFY 2014, the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) achieved or made progress towards many of the identified goals and priorities and innovation and expansion activities established for FFY 2013. This year, the agency also responded to various challenges, not specifically identified in previously stated goals and priorities, such as continuation of an active wait list for all categories, changes in leadership at the Director position and a comprehensive state administered audit and associated recommendations. Due to this, DVR's focus and priorities needed to shift and did not allow for completion of all identified tasks.

Each of the FFY 2013 goals is listed below with a summary of progress described underneath each goal.

### **Goal #1 - Increase the number of successful employment outcomes for DVR clients**

#### Measure:

- 1) By September 2014, DVR will increase the number of successful employment outcomes as indicated by federal requirements
- 2) Decrease clients' dependence on public assistance

#### Ongoing Strategies:

- a) Continue to analyze labor market and industry trends and educate staff and clients regarding findings
- b) Examine options for analyzing trends of vocational goal selection
- c) All DVR staff will continue to have employment outcomes as a measureable core competency in performance plans
- d) Analyze data related to Standard & Indicator 1.6 - Self Support
- e) Explore options to analyze data related to hourly wage and number of hours worked at time of successful closure
- f) Educate staff on use of CO-AWARE resources, particularly the employer module, to utilize business information to increase successful employment outcomes

## **PROGRESS:**

- The Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) closed 2,956 clients as successfully rehabilitated during FFY 2013 as compared to closing 2,496 clients successfully rehabilitated during FFY 2012, resulting in an 18.43% increase in successful employment outcomes.
- In order to measure whether clients' dependence on public assistance (PA) is decreasing as a result of receiving vocational rehabilitation services, DVR has been monitoring the difference between the numbers of successfully rehabilitated clients with public assistance as their primary support at application versus the number of successfully rehabilitated clients with public assistance as their primary support at closure.
  - On average over the twelve months of FFY 2013 for clients successfully rehabilitated, there were 55.6% fewer clients with PA as their primary source of support at closure than there were with PA as their primary source of support at application during that time. This is a significant improvement over FFY 2012's 32.13%.
  - During the first eight months of FFY 2014 for clients successfully rehabilitated, there are 80.8% fewer clients with PA as their primary source of support at closure than there were with PA as their primary source of support at application during that time. This is a significant improvement over FFY 2012's 55.3%.
- The Division's Work Supports and Employer Engagement Unit (WSEE) initiated a quarterly Labor Market Information (LMI) communication tool that highlights national and state level information on emerging industries, declining occupations, wage and training information, etc. Tapping into data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) and other sources, a multi-page newsletter-oriented document is distributed to staff to be used during the comprehensive assessment phase. The LMI tool also features information from Business Outreach staff – "labor market information from the streets". Information on new industries or special training programs can be easily shared. The tool is developed centrally in the administrative office and sent to Business Outreach staff and supervisors. The content



is then reviewed verbally and discussed with DVR counselors in local offices. In addition, the WSEE designed and implemented a system for broadcasting developed job openings in AWARE for instant reference by counselors, and this is currently being used for all Federal openings.

- DVR staff continue to utilize the Employer module within AWARE to capture business contacts, job vacancies, and job openings filled by DVR clients. Because protocol for using AWARE has been set and performance expectations are in effect, job openings are now available in a growing number each month. Besides resulting in employment matches of DVR clients, posted job openings, when searched by DVR counselors, provides real-time occupational trends based on job orders provided to our business outreach staff. A counselor might look at open or open/closed jobs to get an idea of current hiring trends.
- DVR staff continue to assist clients in researching labor market information during the comprehensive assessment analysis. The use of vocational goal development is a hands-on process that empowers clients to research their employment goal. The intent is to help clients make a more informed choice towards selecting an employment goal that not only fits their interests, strengths, abilities, capabilities, resources, priorities, and concerns, but is one that research supports has a strong labor market for the individual to pursue work in and one in which there are jobs available in their communities. In addition, staff use these tools to assist clients in determining the pay range of the vocational goals they are interested in so they can make an informed choice about whether they can earn a living wage to support their lifestyle. Some tools used during this process include Choices, Connecting Colorado and O-Net.
- Counselors are also connecting clients to community resources they need to help meet their daily living needs while they are working, such as housing, health insurance, insurance providers, benefits planners, etc.
- Reports were pulled for a twenty month time frame (October 2012 to May 2014) to analyze clients average monthly hourly wage and number of hours worked at time of successful closure. No significant differences were found. Management staff are also reviewing the average hourly wage by region on a monthly basis to look at fluctuations, trends, rural vs. urban differences, and possible best practices that could be replicated.

- The focus of AWARE training shifted from training on the employer module to a priority on more basic functions. DVR's Human Resource Development Specialist (HRDS) offered both in person and Go To meetings focused on caseload management training and AWARE updates related to 911 changes. In addition, work has begun on brief training videos (5-15 minutes each) that will present specific tasks and tools available in the employer module.
- DVR supervisors continue to receive training on the use of reports in the AWARE system and bring this back to staff. Examples of these reports include activity dues, VR performance statistics, federal follow-up, and year-to-date and portrait layout. Supervisors are also using the "objective" module in AWARE to set measurable objectives that can be tracked each month on a variety of areas such as applications, eligibilities, individual plans for employment and successful closures.
- Statewide training took place in offices throughout the state focused on Internal Job Placement Service Delivery last year. Staff were trained on use of "Service J", how to enter a new employer/job opening, how to refer a job ready candidate to a Business Outreach Specialist, how to search for a job opening, etc. A user's guide was developed for all of the functions and distributed at the training events. Business Outreach staff members also received advanced training on AWARE resources and hard-copy tools for capturing information in the field. Reports are pulled monthly to monitor the use of the Employer Module to determine how to increase its effectiveness.
- Coding accuracy in AWARE continues to be stressed including illustrating how accuracy impacts the agency, Standards and Indicators and federal reporting.
- All DVR staff currently have performance objectives as part of their performance plans and this will continue in the upcoming year. In addition, all DVR staff members engage in the job placement process with a sense of urgency and a focus on quality employment outcomes. Specific roles and responsibilities of business outreach, rehabilitation counselor, rehabilitation technician, supervisor as well as administrative assistant staff are clear.

- Staff are reviewing the use of Service J to analyze IPE goals of clients. Business Outreach Specialists and other staff target job development activities to businesses hiring for positions reflected in the vocational goals.
- Business Outreach Specialists provide staff in their offices with labor market updates on a regular basis. This information is also passed on to clients to be considered when selecting a vocational goal.
- Offices are involved in community events such as job fairs, transition fairs and expo's (Deaf Expo, Military Veteran's Expo), as a way to get the word out about DVR and to increase employment opportunities for clients. In addition, staff are partnering with the community by serving on various boards such as Workforce boards, Human Resource Associations, Transition Teams and more.
- Staff are holding job clubs and inviting employers to the office to interview clients to help them become comfortable with the interview process.
- Staff in one office received training from their local Workforce Center on the "Prove It!" software program. "Prove It!" offers 1,500 validated assessments in different occupational fields and skill sets. The workforce center will conduct these assessments with DVR clients free of charge. These assessment will help the client and DVR counselor understand what skills are needed to be competitive in a chosen vocational area, plan for appropriate training to develop the necessary skills for the chosen vocational area, and can assess the client's skill level before job placement. Several employers in the area are using the assessment for candidates who have favorable interviews to help with the hiring decision.

## **Goal #2 – Increase the visibility and public awareness of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

### Measure:

Establish a baseline by tracking the number of outreach and educational activities conducted by DVR staff to employers, community partners, clients, vendors and Colorado citizens.

### Ongoing Strategies:

- a) Explore options for utilizing the PMAP portfolio for tracking education and awareness activities completed by staff
- b) Examine possibilities of using Survey Monkey to capture staff activities related to education and outreach
- c) Research opportunity for utilizing Field Services meetings as a way to report ongoing outreach and educational activities conducted by staff
- d) Continue to explore the functionality of the DVR website and ensure it provides current and appropriate information and educate staff, clients and partners about the availability of the DVR website
- e) Explore the use of social media resources to increase visibility and awareness of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

### **PROGRESS:**

- After considering various options, Colorado DVR chose to explore Google Drive as a means to capture progress on state plan goals and strategies, as well as activities related to education and outreach. A folder was set up on Google Drive for each office to document activities completed and training was provided to staff on how to access the drive and enter information.
- All DVR staff are continually providing outreach and education to employers, partners, potential DVR clients and other community members. This happens so often, and sometimes so informally, that it is often difficult to capture the extent to which this occurs. Some of this information has been captured on Google Drive and may also be

discussed at Field Services meetings. Examples of outreach include Disability Awareness Trainings, presentations to different organizations and groups such as NAMI, Goodwill, workforce centers, rehabilitation hospitals, etc. One office has a “Community Outreach Day” where staff visit agencies in their area to share information about DVR and to explore potential comparable benefits.

- DVR maintains an Intranet website as an internal resource for staff. This site includes an up-to-date DVR office & staff roster, information regarding comparable benefits, a counselor toolbox, a DVR Training Calendar, and Google tips. In addition there are links to a reference directory, reports and publications, resources and links, staff tools and training, councils and boards, AWARE, information on Colorado DVR’s new “Plan for Excellence”, as well as a search feature.
- In addition to the DVR Intranet, DVR maintains a website for use by internal staff and external parties interested in learning more about DVR’s programs and policies. This site includes an Introduction to DVR Services Video, success stories, information about/for clients, information about/for partners, information about/for employers, news and resources, information about councils and boards, announcements, SRC meeting dates and information and DVR reports.
- DVR’s management team continues to have discussions about the possibilities of using social media as a way to increase visibility and awareness of DVR. Considerations discussed include examining how social media may be effective in promoting DVR, as well as looking into possible issues that may need to be considered or addressed if implemented, such as the pros and cons associated with the use of social media, possible staffing concerns and ongoing maintenance.
- The Information Management and Reporting (IMR) unit creates DVR’s annual report which is disseminated to legislators, stakeholders, partners, clients, family members, SRC members and anyone requesting information about the DVR program. In addition, they create a legislative e-newsletter featuring DVR success stories, Facts at a Glance cards, a legislative packet, and they are responsible for maintenance and upkeep of the DVR website, ensuring information contained on it is up-to-date and accurate.

- DVR staff share information and educate others about DVR as well as network and build collaborative relationships in many ways. Staff serve as board members on various boards, participate in their local Chamber of Commerce, serve as members of human resource associations, participate in job fairs across the state, give presentations to businesses, schools, and other organizations, participate in business association meetings, provide Disability Awareness trainings to various employers, and other organizations, etc.
  
- One office has created a monthly newsletter they send to all clients served in their area. The newsletter includes information on local resources, job leads, upcoming events and more.

▪ **Goal #3 – Improve the rehabilitation experience of DVR clients**

Measure:

Client satisfaction as measured by client surveys, focus groups and other forms of client feedback

On-going Strategies:

- a) Conduct targeted interviews with clients and analyze data to determine common themes and trends to improve client satisfaction with DVR services
- b) Create and implement use of in-office client satisfaction surveys
- c) Explore possibility of on-going client satisfaction survey available via the internet/DVR website
- d) Explore strategies to involve client participation in developing future client satisfaction tools

**PROGRESS:**

- DVR and SRC worked collaboratively to create a new ongoing client satisfaction survey that could be used consistently in all offices across the state. The survey was designed to be sent out quarterly to a random sample of clients a) whose cases had been closed either successfully after plan and b) closed for other reasons after plan development. The first survey was sent out April 1, 2014 and data is being collected on this survey through the end of June. Results will be summarized and provided to DVR management staff and SRC. The next survey will be sent on July 1 to a new sampling of clients. DVR and SRC expect to monitor the survey to look for trends, response rates, ways to improve response rates, etc.
- DVR and SRC held four state plan public hearings across the state to gather input and feedback from clients, families, stakeholders, partners, and other interested Coloradans about the DVR program. The focus was on seven targeted questions related to the state plan and potential policy changes as well as to solicit general comment. After the hearings concluded, staff involved participated in a phone meeting to debrief and discuss how to improve the process and increase attendance. A final report was drafted and submitted to DVR's management team and to SRC.

- DVR offices across the state continually talk about engagement during meetings with clients and providers always stressing “work”. DVR has also developed guidelines for counselors encouraging contact every thirty days with clients in order to increase client engagement. Procedures have also been established on how to most effectively communicate with clients coming off the wait list in order to most efficiently move them toward plan development and employment.
- DVR offices in various areas across the state hold meetings with vendors to address questions they may have in regards to service provision for DVR clients. Clarification provides a greater understanding of DVR and enables vendors to improve their processes when providing direct services to DVR clients.
- Counselors are concentrating on conducting quality intakes focused on asking questions to ensure potential clients understood the DVR program and processes and goal of employment, as well as talking with potential clients about the timing of their application for services.
- Various offices have developed their own in-office surveys that are often housed at the reception desk so clients can take them whenever they come in for appointments, providing immediate feedback. Results of these surveys are being used to praise and reinforce staff, are used as training tools targeted at areas of improvement and are used as part of “client service boards” for others to see the good work that is being done.
- In some areas, Rehabilitation Technicians are being used to complete targeted interviews with clients after meetings as a way to ensure clients understanding of what is happening and to gather information about how the meeting went as a way to increase client satisfaction.
- Collaborative meetings are being held with community partners to discuss service coordination and improvement of processes to improve client satisfaction.



- **Goal #4 – Create a workforce succession plan within DVR that is conducive to maintaining a competent staff.**

Measure:

- 1) By October 2014, DVR will identify business needs for the agency
- 2) DVR will identify short term (1-2 year) and long term (3-5 year) goals for the organization

On-going Strategies:

- a) Develop a workforce succession plan based on DVR business need to include the following:
  - 1) Develop a career track for each job classification
  - 2) Develop a centralized and cohesive training model which is available and accessible to all staff
  - 3) Develop a mentoring program for all job classifications
  - 4) Identify leadership qualities and characteristics
  - 5) Develop a workforce plan
- b) DVR regions will explore progressive solutions to implementing cross-training and team approaches to service provision and processes
- c) DVR will continue to analyze opportunities and implement solutions for expanding various job classifications within DVR (Rehabilitation Counselor series, VRT/OM series, Business Outreach Specialists series and other promotional opportunities for effective DVR staff)
- d) DVR will continue to analyze information obtained from exit interviews with staff who are leaving the agency
- e) DVR will continue to identify and provide staff development opportunities to all DVR service delivery staff, especially newer rehabilitation counselors
- f) New supervisors within DVR will receive training on creating a retention culture

- g) Continue to provide foundational education and training for DVR staff, including coding accuracy in CO-AWARE

**PROGRESS:**

- During the past year, the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has worked through a University of Massachusetts - Boston, Institute on Community Inclusion research project administered through the Research and Technical Assistance Center to further identify our business needs for workforce and succession planning and identify both short and long term goals. Throughout the project, DVR was successful in working with the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Human Resources Division to obtain personnel information and begin to establish a mechanism for classifying all positions located within DVR. DVR worked through a steering committee comprised of members from DVR, CDHS Human Resources, and staff from the Region VIII Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) program. This committee was able to identify key components of the DVR workforce plan and design a color coded organizational chart that addressed the following factors: the agency's needs and trends for the next three years including staff eligible for retirement currently or within the next three years; current DVR workforce and described needs in each office or region; current vacancies; and attention to challenges in filling certain DVR positions based on positions hard to fill due to geographic location or because of the required skill set necessary for the incumbent to possess in order to fill that position. This work has created the foundation for the development of DVR's approach to succession planning and DVR will continue to build on this project's accomplishments on an ongoing basis.
- DVR's short term goals are to continue to use the developed workforce plan to inform the prioritization of hiring decisions as positions become available. The Field Management Team meets monthly to use the organizational charts and other caseload data to analyze and evaluate the business needs of each service area and district to ensure that staff capacity to serve clients exists consistently in all four regions of the state. The Field Management Team takes this work to the Director and the Senior Leadership Team and hiring priorities are implemented at these levels.
- Due to many challenges experienced by DVR during the past year, including two changes in leadership at the Director position and a comprehensive state administered audit and

associated recommendations, DVR's focus and priorities have shifted and not allowed for completion of all identified tasks within this goal area. However, some progress has been made to begin to establish centralized and consistent training priorities that will provide the foundation for future succession planning efforts within Colorado DVR. While each position does not have a clearly identified "career track", DVR will continue to work with the available professional development opportunities at the Department level to ensure staff are able to adequately prepare themselves for movement into positions with higher levels of responsibility.

- The Division is also hoping to formalize a mentoring process and program for staff over the coming two years as audit recommendations and solutions are implemented and solidified. In addition, DVR will be exploring future use of both internal and external satisfaction surveys to improve the business processes used by the agency and intends to use exit interviews of staff as a component to this approach.
- Finally, as the new Director continues to build the Senior Leadership Team and build on the learning opportunities presented by the statewide audit, positions and their associated position descriptions will continue to be evaluated and assessed for the highest quality use of staff capacity to ensure both opportunities for professional growth and development as well as the improvement of the overall agency's performance quality.
- DVR has been conducting web based exit surveys with staff upon their departure from the agency. The purpose of the survey is to gather information on topics such as how long each individual was employed with DVR, which positions have the highest rates of turnover, whether individuals plan on working in a different VR agency or different field altogether, whether staff transferred to or changed work units/locations while at DVR, reasons for leaving, whether staffs departure may have been preventable and what might have helped staff remain employed with DVR. Data gathered is reviewed and examined by management staff in order to determine what might be done to maintain staff and reduce turnover.
- The addition of the rehabilitation technician (RT) position has allowed for a more team approach to assisting clients. Training in the DVR process, medical aspects of disability

and other topics have been offered to RT's in order to increase their knowledge and depth of how they can assist a client.

- DVR continues to be committed to promoting consistency and quality in supervisors' performance in supervision and is committed to doing this in a positive and empowering way. Supervisors have received training in motivational interviewing and have completed training related to Strengths Finders. Additionally, training on clinical supervision will be provided to supervisors in August 2014.
- Some of the lead counselors are being given the opportunity to be a part of disciplinary improvement plans for staff in their units, allowing them to not only mentor and teach other staff, but allowing them to experience duties they would be expected to perform if they advanced to supervisory positions.

## **Innovation and Expansion Activities**

### **Use of Title I Funds for FFY 2013 Innovation and Expansion Activities**

Total expenditures of Title I funds for innovation and expansion activities for Federal FY 2013 were as follows:

Support of the State Rehabilitation Council	\$ 11,786.34
Support of the State Independent Living Council	\$ 36,846.41

### **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 FFY 2014 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.

**Progress toward achieving goals and plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds (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 uses both Title VI-B funds and Title I funds for this purpose. When Title VI-B funds are not available, DVR uses Title I funds to assure that supported employment services are not interrupted. 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.

**Progress on Standards and Indicators**

Below, please see chart showing DVR’s progress on required Standards and Indicators for FFY 2012, the last complete fiscal year. (Please note that these results are final but still preliminary as we continue to wait on the BLS (Bureau of Labor Statistics) to finalize their average state wage data.)

**STANDARDS & INDICATORS for FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2013**

(Beginning Date: 10/01/2012 - End Date: 09/30/2013 → Run Date: 09/30/2013)

<b>STANDARD 1</b>	<b>REQUIRED</b>	<b>RESULT</b>
Indicator 1.1 - Change in Employment Outcomes	<b>&gt;= 0</b>	<b>+461</b>  (FFY 2012: 2496)  (FFY 2013: 2957)
Indicator 1.2 - Percentage of Post-IPE Closures that	<b>55.8%</b>	<b>67.13%</b>

are Successful Employment Outcomes		
Indicator 1.3 - Percentage of Successful Employment Outcomes that are in Competitive Employment	72.6%	90.94%
Indicator 1.4 - Percentage of Successful Competitive Employment Outcomes that are for Persons with Significant Disabilities	62.4%	91.56%
Indicator 1.5 - Average Hourly Wage for All Successful Competitive Employment Outcomes vs. the Average Hourly Wage for all Colorado Workers	52.0%	48.05%  (Based on Average CO Wage of \$24.31.)
Indicator 1.6 - For Successful Competitive Outcomes, the Percentage whose Primary Support is Own Income at Application vs. at Closure	53.0%	69.36%
<b>STANDARD 2</b>	<b>REQUIRED</b>	<b>RESULT</b>
Indicator 2.1 - Percentage of All Closures – Persons from Minority Backgrounds vs. Persons from Non-minority Backgrounds	80.0%	95.78

**ATTACHMENT 6.3**

Quality, Scope and Extent of Supported Employment Services

**FY 2015**

## **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 clients 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 is 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 client evaluation, realistic goal setting, development of precise plans of services, including objective progress reporting for the continuous process and, meaningful recordkeeping. As well, staff will be working on additional supported employment training materials during 2014.

Direct utilization of Title I (Vocational Rehabilitation Services) and Title VI-B (Supported Employment Services) case service 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 (see service definitions at end of document) 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.



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.

DVR's required documentation 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, and a description of extended services needed.

Supported employment services provided under Title VI-B and Title I are provided up to 18 months from when actual employment begins unless the team has determined that more time is necessary for the client to achieve job stabilization before the individual with the most significant disabilities transitions to extended services. In these cases, the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) can be amended to provide a longer period of services to fully attain the weekly work goal and/or stabilize employment.

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 the Office of Behavioral Health 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. For example, when DVR has an active wait list, there is a process in place to allow applicants with developmental disabilities to access waiver services more swiftly. DVR has developed an "Affidavit of Application" letter to be used for individuals with a developmental disability who are currently working with a Community Centered Board (CCB) and have Medicaid Waiver Supported Employment Services available to them. The intent of this letter is to notify the CCB Case Manager that an application for the client has been taken, and that the client will be placed on DVR's Order of Selection wait list once his/her priority classification is determined. Completion of this form will allow the CCB to access Medicaid Waiver Supported Employment Services for the individual after the intake is complete. In addition, DVR has trained staff about SSA work incentives and other options for extended support provision such as self-pay and Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE) plans, so that clients who have been denied DVR services due to lack of waiver funding, may move forward toward pursuing their employment goals.

DVR, the Division for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD), and the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) have created an environment, through collaborative policy development and innovative funding initiatives, which encourages local provider agencies to enhance existing supported employment services. These efforts continue through an intra-agency agreement between DVR and OBH to expand and develop methods to provide effective supported employment services to mutual clients. DVR is also working on obtaining a new cooperative agreement with the Division of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities towards these goals.

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. 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.

## **Supported Employment Services**

### Applicant

An individual who submits an application for vocational rehabilitation services in accordance with section 5.12 of the DVR Policy Manual.

### Competitive Employment

Full or part time work in the competitive labor market, in an integrated setting, for which compensation is at or above the customary wage and benefits paid by the employer to persons who do not have disabilities for the same or similar jobs. Compensation must reflect at least minimum wage.

### Concerns

For purposes of determining a suitable employment goal, concerns include anxieties or worries related to vocational objective such as impact of earnings on benefits, child care needs, and earning and benefit requirements.

### Extended Services

Ongoing support services and other appropriate services that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment and that are provided by a State agency, a private non-profit organization, employer or any other appropriate resource after transition from support provided by DVR.

### Facility-Based Services

Services provided in structures or environments designed specifically to furnish goods and services to persons with disabilities and other special populations, such as community rehabilitation program facilities, clubhouses, independent living centers, special residential facilities, extended employment sites, segregated enclave program sites, etc.

### Functional Capacity Area

Set of life activities or skills in which the ability to function is significant to successful independence and/or employment. Eight such areas have been identified for purposes of severity of disability: mobility, motor skills, interpersonal skills, communication, work tolerance, work skills, self-care and self-direction.

### Individual with a Most Significant Disability

An individual with a most significant disability has a severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits three or more functional capacity areas (mobility, motor skills, interpersonal skills, communication, work tolerance, work skills, self-care and self-direction) in terms of an employment outcome; and, whose successful vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require the provision of two or more core vocational rehabilitation services for at least five months.

### Integrated Settings

- Integrated Service Setting

A setting typically found in the community in which the individual with a disability interacts with persons, other than service provider(s), who do not have disabilities.

- Integrated Work Setting

An employment setting typically found in the community in which the individual with a disability interacts with persons who do not have disabilities other than service provider(s), to the same extent as persons who do not have disabilities in comparable positions.

### Job Coaching

Training provided by an individual, other than the employer (unless under a program of natural supports in a supported employment placement), to a client after he/she has been placed in a paid employment situation. Job coaching services include job skill training at the work site, work site orientation, monitoring of the individual at the job site to assess employment stability and coordination or provision of specific services at or away from the work site to maintain employment stability.

### Job Seeking Skills Training

Training to teach clients how to conduct job searches, prepare resumes, complete applications, and to interview effectively. The provision of job seeking skills training is intended to enable the individual to conduct an independent job search.

### Job Shadowing

A community-based situational assessment provided in a real work setting where the individual observes and possibly assists in the performance of a specific job so that the individual has a sufficient understanding of job requirements to assist with making an informed choice among potential employment outcomes.

### Job Site Evaluation

A limited situational assessment (up to three hours) which consists of observing an individual with a disability on a specific job to determine if the job and/or work setting is appropriate for the individual and/or to determine accommodations that may be needed.

### Job Placement

Job placement services are services to help an individual obtain suitable, stable, and satisfactory employment in an integrated setting which is consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. Job placement services include the provision of individualized job search assistance, assistance in completing work applications and arranging for interviews, preparing for interviews, on-site job analyses, on-site consultation with employers, recommendations for work-site job modifications, and/or up to four hours of orientation to the work place, as appropriate to the individual's specific needs.

### Job Stability

When an employed individual is reasonably expected to continue to perform all job duties acceptably, without the provision of further vocational rehabilitation services.

### Mental Impairment

Any mental or psychological disorder such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness and specific learning disabilities.

### On-going Support Services

Ongoing support services are time-limited services provided by DVR that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment. These services are identified based on a determination by DVR of the individual's vocational need as specified in an Individualized Plan for Employment. DVR provides these ongoing services from the time of job placement until transition to extended supported employment services.

### Personal Adjustment Training

Training provided to help individuals develop compensatory skills and/or to adjust behavior in the areas of independent living, personal functioning, homemaking, orientation and mobility, adaptive communication, assistive technology, daily living skills, and, if applicable, low vision.

### Physical Impairment

Any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine

### Post-Employment Services

One or more vocational rehabilitation services that are provided subsequent to the achievement of an employment outcome and that are necessary for an individual to maintain, regain or advance in employment, consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice. These services are available to meet rehabilitation needs that do not require a complex and comprehensive provision of services and, thus, should be limited in scope and duration.

### Priorities

For purposes of determining a suitable employment goal, priorities include work and personal factors of primary importance to the individual (such as preference for certain work environments, hours, status, urgency of acquiring employment).

### Provider

The individual and/or organization which will render a necessary good or service.

### Situational Assessment

A type of vocational evaluation conducted to assess work behaviors, interpersonal skills and job-related skill levels for purposes of establishing eligibility or developing the Individualized Employment Plan. Situational assessments may take place in community-based settings, including real life work and transitional employment settings, or in facility-based settings, such as community rehabilitation program facilities.

### Supported Employment

Competitive employment in an integrated setting or employment in an integrated setting in which individuals are working toward competitive employment, consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disability.

### Supported Employment Services

Ongoing support services and other appropriate services needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment that are provided by DVR for a period of time not to exceed 18 months from when actual employment begins, unless under special circumstances the client and the rehabilitation counselor jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the Individualized Plan for Employment.

### Transitional Employment

A series of temporary job placements in competitive work in integrated settings with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities due to mental illness. In transitional employment, the provision of ongoing support services must include continuing sequential job placements until job permanency is achieved.

### Vendor

A provider to whom DVR can pay for a particular good or service.

### Weekly Work Goal

An estimate of the number of hours per week which the client with a most significant disability can work to achieve the identified employment outcome. The weekly work goal must be consistent with the client's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice.