

Indiana's Commission on Rehabilitation Services



2014 Annual Report

Federal Fiscal Year 2014

October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014



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GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Held each year in October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), is a campaign to raise awareness about disability employment issues; celebrates the many and varied contributions of workers with disabilities across America. 2014's theme is "Expect. Employ. Empower." The Commission on Rehabilitation Services (CRS), Bureau Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and other disability related organizations across Indiana participate in these annual campaigns and have as a fundamental focus to assist persons with disabilities in achieving employment and independence. Review this annual report to learn more about the impressive outcomes of the Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) program!

It is the Indiana Commission on Rehabilitation Services (CRS) responsibility to inform Indiana citizens, the Governor, and the Rehabilitation Services Administration about the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), and to encourage feedback from consumers, employers and service providers in order to ensure VRS strives for continuous improvement and customer satisfaction in its provision of services to eligible Hoosiers with disabilities seeking employment. The services provided by VRS must be considered necessary for a consumer to achieve his/her goal of employment. Such services could include assistance with education, training, vehicle modification, prostheses fitting, or sensory aids and devices, if appropriate. VRS has successfully worked with service providers, employers, and other state agencies to provide the most comprehensive services to Hoosiers with disabilities. In evaluating the effectiveness of the VRS program, the Commission is pleased to state that VRS continues to provide employment opportunities which foster personal growth and enhance independence. Each year, hundreds of Hoosiers with disabilities become tax-paying members of our society by achieving employment through assistance provided by VRS.

The Commission members are a valuable asset to VRS due to the fact that the Commission is comprised of a statewide culturally diverse group of individuals with various areas of interest and expertise. Commissioners are individuals with a broad range disabilities; family member or emissary of individuals with disabilities; and former VRS consumers. Other members are advocates, employers, business, industry, labor reps and representatives from a variety of organizations seeking to promote independence and full employment of Hoosiers with disabilities.

As Commissioners, appointed by the Governor, we take our responsibilities seriously to review, analyze, advise and monitor the performance of the BRS VRS program. We have a significant role in reviewing Policy and Procedure Manual updates, the Indiana State Plan for VRS, client appeals, customer satisfaction survey data, and needs assessment reports. We represent the Commission at federal, state, and regional conferences, meetings, and events to promote positive perspectives about Hoosiers with disabilities who are seeking employment. Our responsibility also includes attending public hearings and forums to listen to public needs and concerns. Commissioners advise VRS to ensure the highest level of service and satisfaction for VRS consumers and for the businesses/employers that employ them.

Every day of each year, the State Rehabilitation Councils and the public vocational rehabilitation programs promote employment awareness; invest in the community of people disabilities and their employers. In this, report find evidence of excellent leadership; strong program management, improvements in delivery of services; and effect on still unserved/underserved populations of people with disabilities. With your help, BRS/VRS and this Commission can achieve great things and help Hoosiers with disabilities seek, find and obtain employment.

Respectfully,

Dee Ann Hart

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As I prepare this message, I find myself reflecting on this past year with a strong awareness of the vital role played by everyone in supporting this time of transition for the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services. Collectively, much has been accomplished through the creative energy and steadfast commitment of everyone in the field of vocational rehabilitation. As I think about the accomplishments, my mind swiftly moves to the year ahead and how we will build on these accomplishments as the foundation for the future of BRS. Focusing on a shift in VR from a system-centric process to a consumer-centric process has been challenging and extremely rewarding as we now see the impact of these efforts with the implementation of several newly established initiatives.

One of the key initiatives involved adding fifty-three new field staff, VR Case Coordinators. The VR Case Coordinator positions will support the current VR Counselors and their caseloads by providing support of the VR service process, case management tasks, and fiscal functions. The hiring of these individuals will result in more time for VR Counselor to provide counseling and guidance to consumers and become more engaged in each consumer's employment process.

An important initiative of education and outreach has been expanded to re-energize partnerships and better educate potential consumers and their families, as well as many key stakeholders. The BRS Business and Community Engagement team has launched the #work4life campaign to more effectively reach transition-aged students and educate the public by utilizing social media. The feedback has been very positive in getting young people to think about the value of employment.

Additionally, enhancing customer service included recognizing the need to clearly define policy. BRS has completed its draft of new rules for the rule promulgation that will undergo public comment in 2015. BRS will continue ongoing review of policies that affect consumers to ensure consistent application throughout the State.

In 2014, rate reform for employment services underwent a critical analysis through the assistance of a workgroup comprised of many stakeholders. This process emphasized a need for a new model that emphasized the need to: determine services on an individualized basis, increase consumer access to assessment and discovery activities, better serve individuals with the most significant disabilities through supported employment, utilize the full menu of VR services for consumers, and determine appropriate rates to ensure reimbursement is appropriate for Community Rehabilitation Providers. The dedicated commitment of this workgroup resulted in BRS establishing a new rate structure for employment services that will be implemented in 2015.

Throughout 2014, I have greatly appreciated the enthusiasm and positive feedback in defining programmatic and operational initiatives to most effectively meet the complex service needs of our consumers to ensure their long term employment success. As we look to 2015, BRS is very excited to embark upon the new landscape of implementing VR services in coordination and collaboration under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). We are working with the Department of Workforce Development and their local Workforce Investment Boards (as well as many other key stakeholders in Indiana) to better utilize employment resources and define best practices to support and strengthen a partnership of working together to best meet the employment needs of mutual consumers in work-related programs.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to everyone for your on-going support. I am very pleased with the good work being done by the Commission on Rehabilitation Services, and wish to assure the

Commission that BRS will continue in its partnerships with business leaders, educators, state agencies, and community organizations to best meet the needs of VR consumers in 2015. The role played by the Commission will continue to be vitally important.

Thank you for your on-going support. I look forward to working with everyone in 2015.

Sincerely,

Kylee B. Hope, Director
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

MISSION VALUES PAGE

THE COMMISSION ON REHABILITATION SERVICES AND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

MISSION STATEMENT

**TO ASSIST PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
IN ACHIEVING EMPLOYMENT AND INDEPENDENCE**

VALUES

VALUE 1 We value persons with disabilities and their equal opportunity to maximize employment, independence, and, to fully participate in their rehabilitation program.

VALUE 2 We value quality services for persons with disabilities to achieve employment and independence.

VALUE 3 We value staff as Vocational Rehabilitation Services' greatest resource.

OVERVIEW

The Rehabilitation Act requires the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency to establish a State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). In Indiana, the required State Rehabilitation Council was established under the preexisting Indiana Rehabilitation Commission and is named the Commission on Rehabilitation Services, as stated in Indiana Code, IC 12-12-2-1. References to the "Council" in this report are applicable to the Commission on Rehabilitation Services. Council members are appointed by the governor and serve no more than two consecutive full terms. No terms can exceed three years.

As required by the Rehabilitation Act, the Commission is composed of individual's representative of the following categories.

- Statewide Independent Living Council
- Parent Training and Information Center
- Client Assistance Program
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- Community Rehabilitation Program
- Business, Industry and Labor
- Disability Advocacy Groups
- Current or former Applicants or recipients of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- IN Department of Workforce Development
- IN Department of Education

MEMBERS

Indiana's Commission on Rehabilitation Services is comprised of the following individuals representing specific categories, identified below, as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 361.17.

Commission Officers:

Dee Ann Hart, Chairperson, Muncie, IN
Representing Business, Industry, or Labor
(Appointed as Chairperson, September 2013 and September 2014)

Tim Kirk, Vice-Chairperson, Vincennes, IN
Representing a Community Rehabilitation Program
(Appointed as Vice-Chairperson, September 2013 and September 2014)

Michael Craciunoiu, Secretary, Indianapolis, IN
Representing Business, Industry, and Labor
(Appointed as Secretary, September 2013)

Scott Beauchamp, Indianapolis, IN
Representing Business, Industry, or Labor
(Appointed as Secretary, September 2014)

Other Members:

Nancy Davisson, Vincennes, IN
Representing the IN Department of Workforce Development

Leslie L. Hawker, Farmersburg, IN
Representing the Independent Living Council

James Michaels, Indianapolis, IN
Representing disability groups that include a cross-section of individuals with various disabilities, representatives of individuals with disabilities, current and/or former applicants for, and/or recipients of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Rebecca Reed, Indianapolis, IN
Representing the IN Department of Education

Karen Rusk, Brownsburg, IN
Representing a parent training and information center established pursuant to section 682(a) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

*Yvonne “Dolly” Sowder, Bedford, IN

Representing disability groups that includes a cross-section of individuals with various disabilities, representatives of individuals with disabilities, current and/or former applicants for, and/or recipients of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Dan Stewart, Richmond, IN

Representing disability groups that include a cross section of individuals with disabilities who have difficulty representing themselves or are unable due to their disabilities to represent themselves

Traci Anne Taylor, Richmond, IN

Representing disability groups that include a cross-section of individuals with various disabilities, representatives of individuals with disabilities, current and/or former applicants for, and/or recipients of, Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Cathy Wingard, Indianapolis, IN

Representing the Client Assistance Program

Ex-Officio Non-Voting Members:

Kylee B. Hope, Director of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Indianapolis, IN

Teresa Hudson, Vincennes, IN

Representing Vocational Rehabilitation Services Counselors

Other BRS Representation:

Steve Etheridge, Fort Wayne, IN

Representing Vocational Rehabilitation Services Counselors

Mary Hamilton, Indianapolis, IN

Representing Vocational Rehabilitation Services Counselors

Theresa Kaplon, Elkhart, IN

Representing Vocational Rehabilitation Services Counselors

*Jeanine Larson, Indianapolis, IN

Representing Vocational Rehabilitation Services Counselors

Julie Miller, Bloomington, IN

Representing Vocational Rehabilitation Services Counselors

**Former members due to completion of final term, change in employment, change in representation category, resignation, or death.*

FUNCTIONS

The Commission's responsibilities are outlined in Section 105 of the United States Rehabilitation Act.

In performing the following functions, the Commission must consult with the State Workforce Investment Board:

- Review, analyze, and advise the Vocational Rehabilitation Services program regarding their performance related to eligibility, order of selection, the extent, scope and effectiveness of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and functions performed by Vocational Rehabilitation Services that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities to achieve an employment outcome.

In partnership with the Vocational Rehabilitation Services program:

- Develop, agree to, and review the state's goals and priorities;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Vocational Rehabilitation Services program and submit an annual report to the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration;
- Conduct a comprehensive statewide needs assessment, every three years, of individuals with disabilities living in the state;
- Advise Vocational Rehabilitation Services regarding its activities;
- Assist in the preparation of the State Plan, amendments to the Plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations, including those necessary for the Vocational Rehabilitation Services program to satisfy the requirements of developing a comprehensive system of personnel development and establishing an order of selection;
- Review and analyze the effectiveness of and consumer satisfaction with Vocational Rehabilitation Services functions, services provided by Vocational Rehabilitation Services and others, and employment outcomes achieved by Vocational Rehabilitation Services consumers;
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the governor and the commissioner of the U. S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration on the status of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program in the state, and make the report available to the public;
- Coordinate the activities of the State Rehabilitation Council with the activities of other councils, such as the State Independent Living Council (SILC), the advisory panel established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the State Developmental Disabilities Council, the State Mental Health Planning Council, and the State Workforce Investment Board;

- Provide for the coordination and the establishment of working relationships between Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the State Independent Living Council and the Centers for Independent Living; and
- Perform other functions that are determined appropriate and comparable to the State Rehabilitation Council's other functions, provided they are consistent with the purpose of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and its implementing regulations.

COMMITTEES

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services has developed the following committees to conduct their federally mandated functions:

POLICY AND OVERSIGHT AND PLANNING AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Policy & Oversight - consults with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) on the development, implementation, and revision of State policies and procedures pertaining to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services; reviews appeals; advises BRS on eligibility and the scope and effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services and activities, and the functions that affect individual employment outcomes. The committee's purpose relates to the implementation of policies and procedures rather than the day-to-day management of the programs, and involves researching issues brought before the Commission.

Planning and Evaluation - functions in partnership with BRS to fulfill all planning, evaluating, and reporting responsibilities as defined in the Rehabilitation Act. This includes:

Needs Assessment - works with BRS in the development and evaluation of the BRS statewide needs assessment, which is required every three years.

Goals and Priorities - provides input into the development of State goals and priorities, and incorporates into recommendations consumer comments from public forums, satisfaction surveys, etc. in coordination with VRS.

State Plan - reviews and makes recommendations pertaining to State Plan amendments, ensuring compliance with Rehabilitation Act requirements in partnership with VRS.

Evaluation and Reporting - evaluates the effectiveness of the BRS program and the State Plan goals and priorities, and other requirements of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that the annual report submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration complies with the federal requirements: and makes the report widely available to the public through the BRS website and the NCSRC website.

RECRUITMENT, PUBLIC OUTREACH, AND COMMISSION DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Recruitment - researches, recruits, and nominates candidates who are interested in serving on the Commission. Names and contact information of potential candidates are submitted to the governor for consideration. The committee also ensures that the nominations for Commission chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary are solicited as warranted.

Public Outreach - coordinates public education, advocacy, publicity, and outreach efforts; develops the approach and strategies to enhance the image and vitality of the Commission; and distributes materials for effective communication with consumers, the public, and the Rehabilitation Services Administration, including reports, brochures, etc. The committee is responsible for making recommendation regarding information for the Commission's annual report..

Commission Development - collaborates with the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) to ensure that all Commission members are well informed and participate in national training initiatives and remain knowledgeable in matters related to the Commission's duties and the achievement of defined goals. The committee is responsible for the orientation of newly appointed Commission members through the development of presentations and training components.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION COMMITTEE

Customer Satisfaction - reviews and analyzes customer input and/or satisfaction with the State VRS Program including VRS services and employment outcomes, and conduct activities necessary to assess satisfaction and obtain feedback.

MEETINGS

The Commission conducted business meetings on November 8, 2013, January 16, 2014, March 14, 2014, May 9, 2014, July 11, 2014, and September 12, 2014. Due to inclement weather, the State Plan development meeting scheduled for January was held on February 4, 2014 via webinar.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The following accomplishments were achieved by the Commission during FFY 2014:

- Provided input into VRS policies;
- Collaborated with VRS in the development of the annual revisions to the state plan;
- Attended state plan public hearings;

- Represented the Commission at the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) Training in Bethesda, Maryland;
- Represented the Commission at the 7th Annual Summit, Performance Management in Vocational Rehabilitation, held in Louisville, KY;
- Represented the Commission at the 2014 Vocational Rehabilitation Symposium, Focus on Fundamentals;
- Reviewed committee descriptions and re-aligned committee responsibilities and membership to be more effective;
- Evaluated VRS appeal decisions and made recommendations for changes when systemic issues were identified;
- Participated in BRS Policy and Procedure Manual (PPM) work groups developed to assist in the promulgation of rules for the BRS Policy and Procedures Manual (PPM);
- Achieved the goal of networking with other governor-appointed boards, councils, and commissions, as well as agencies and organizations, to enhance the visibility of the Commission and to provide linkages by participating in related events throughout the year;
- Identified guest presentations as a mechanism for collaboration and outreach to expand statewide awareness of the Commission;
- Worked with state government leaders in an effort to ensure that the Commission's membership was in compliance with federal mandates; and
- Established goals for 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Indiana's BRS has been actively responsive and supportive of the Commission on Rehabilitation Services' suggestions and recommendations. The Commission is federally required to provide input into VRS policy revisions and state plan development.

Input into VR Rules

In 2014, BRS drafted new rules for the Vocational Rehabilitation program. The rules are currently in the promulgation process that is expected to conclude at the end of 2015. During the rules drafting phase, BRS established five workgroups – Post-Secondary, Vehicle Modification, Home Modification, Hearing Aids, and Small Business Enterprise – to review the information in the relevant sections of the Policy and Procedure Manual (PPM) and make recommendations to 1) improve current policies; and 2) provide guidance for the contents of

the new rules. Some of the Commission members were able to participate in the workgroups and provided very useful guidance and recommendations. In addition, the recommendations from all the workgroups were submitted to the Commission, as a whole, for a full review before including any of the recommendations in the rules.

Input into BRS State Plan Development/ Federal Performance Standards and Indicators

On February 4, 2014, members of the Commission conducted a BRS state plan development meeting, via webinar, to provide input and assistance to BRS in developing annual revisions to the State Plan for Title I (VRS Program) and Title VI-B (Supported Employment Services). The Commission reviewed the results of the federal performance standards and indicators and the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2014 state plan. In preparation for the meeting, all Commission members were provided with the FFY 2014 state plan via an electronic e-mail dated January 13, 2014. The Commission had the opportunity to provide input into all State Plan attachments and the Federal Performance Standards and Indicators. The Commission's review focused on the Federal Performance Standards and Indicators.

A detailed report of Commission comments and BRS responses can be located within the current State Plan at the following link: <https://secure.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/4049.htm>

FEDERAL PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

Federal Performance Indicator 1.1: Change in Employment Outcomes

The difference between the number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the current performance period and the number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the previous performance period

Federal Performance Level: Equal or Exceed Previous Year

BRS Goal 1.1 – Total persons with employment (rehabilitation) outcomes (target: increase over previous year).

Outcome: FFY 2013 - 4,652, FFY 2014 -4,377

Federal Performance Indicator 1.2: – Percent of Employment Outcomes

The percentage of individuals exiting the program during the performance period who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services

Federal Performance Level: 55.8%

BRS Goal 1.2 – Percent of persons achieving an employment outcome (target: 55.8%).

Outcome: FFY 2013 - 60.69%, FFY 2014 – 59.50%

Federal Performance Indicator 1.3: – (Primary Indicator) Competitive Employment Outcomes

The percentage who exit the VR program in employment in integrated settings with or without ongoing support services, self-employment, or BEP (Business Enterprise Program) employment

with hourly rate of earnings equivalent to at least the federal or state minimum wage rate, whichever is higher, based on all the individuals exiting the program who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services.

Federal Performance Level: 72.6%

BRS Goal 1.3 - Percent of persons achieving competitive employment (target: 72.69%)

Outcome: FFY 2013 -96.54%, FFY 2014 – 97.01%

Federal Performance Indicator 1.4: – (Primary Indicator) Significance of Disability

The percentage of those individuals identified in Indicator 1.3 who have significant disabilities.

Federal Performance Level: 62.4%

BRS Goal 1.4 - Percent of persons in competitive employment with significant disabilities (target: 62.4%).

Outcome: FFY2013 - 78.91%, FFY 2014 – 82.57%

Federal Performance Indicator 1.5 (Primary Indicator) Earnings Ratio

The ratio of the average hourly earnings of all individuals in competitive employment to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the state

Federal Performance Level: .52

BRS Goal 1.5 - Average hourly earnings of persons in competitive employment, divided by the State, all workers, and average hourly earnings (target: 0.52).

Outcome: FFY2013 - 0.58, FFY 2014 - .59

Federal Performance Indicator 1.6: Self Support

For those identified in Performance Indicator 1.3, the difference in the percentage of individuals who at program entry reported their income as the largest single source of support, and the percentage that reported their personal income as the largest single source of support at program exit.

Federal Performance Level: > = 53.0

BRS Goal 1.6 - Application to closure change in percent of persons in competitive employment with own income as primary source of support (target: > = 53.0).

Outcome: FFY 2013 - 50.66, FFY 2014 – 49.81

Federal Performance Indicator 2.1: Minority Background Service Rate

The ratio of the percent of individuals with a minority background to the percent of individuals without a minority background exiting the program who received VR services

Federal Performance Level: .80

BRS Goal 2.1 - Service rate for minorities divided by service rate for non-minorities (target: 0.80).

Outcome: FFY 2013 - .83, FFY 2014 - .88

The Commission provided the following input regarding the Performance Indicators:

Performance Indicator 1.1

Change in Employment Outcomes (+1)

The difference between the number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the current performance period and the number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the previous performance period

COMMISSION COMMENTS [BRS RESPONSE, AS APPROPRIATE, IN BRACKETS]

COMMENTS: It appears that one of the reasons this indicator wasn't met has more to do with current employment trends during difficult economic times. In the best of circumstances, employment outcomes for persons with disabilities are going to lag behind the general workforce. Working on educating the general public and changing attitudes would be an excellent inroad to helping improve employment outcomes. Perhaps using Commission members with significant disabilities to facilitate programs or give presentations may help the general population see us as something more than decoration in the process.

While the state's overall employment rate has fallen, VR has fallen short in meeting its employment outcome goal for people with disabilities. VR has changed the way it calculates "unmet need" for those eligible individuals wishing to obtain a higher education or vocational need. Now, fewer individuals are receiving financial assistance from VR for post-secondary training. VR needs to consider providing "maintenance" (see PPM 200.61) for those individuals who may not have increased living expenses due to attending school but who still cannot afford the other costs associated with attending school. There needs to be a more equitable policy established to determine unmet need.

A person being placed in a job that is not compatible with the individual's capabilities, abilities, interests, etc. or placed in a job that may not provide enough income to allow the person to be self reliant end up quitting these jobs prior to reaching a "successful closure" with VR. This could account for a portion of the results in this indicator this year. More use of the on-the-job-training services (PPM 531) could assist in this area.

VR needs to strengthen their involvement with the State's sheltered workshops (facility-based work centers). Individuals with disabilities who are making far less than minimum wage at workshops need to be afforded "choice" (on an ongoing basis) in work settings and afforded an opportunity to work in more integrated settings and earn a fair wage. This could lead to additional successful closures.

[BRS Response: BRS is revisiting the entire PPM to draft rules. Specifically, BRS has set aside a work group to address post-secondary and other important policies.

BRS leadership has encouraged VR Counselors to refocus efforts on provision of guidance and counseling to consumers to ensure quality placements and outcomes. VR Counselors even have new performance metrics for staff related to engagement with consumers to encourage Counselors to continue his/her counseling and guidance to confirm stabilization on the job and ensure such placement is agreed upon by the consumer and meets the IPE goals.

VR is working with the Bureau of Developmental Disability Services (BDDS) to ensure those with the most significant disabilities are referred to VR when appropriate. VR does not provide supports to individuals in sheltered workshop settings, nor provide direct supports to individuals pursuing sheltered workshop outcomes. The commission's comments regarding sheltered workshops will be shared with BDDS as the comments may be more relevant for our BDDS partners.]

Performance Indicator 1.2

Percent of Employment Outcomes (55.8%)

The percentage of individuals exiting the program during the performance period who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services

COMMISSION COMMENTS [BRS RESPONSE, AS APPROPRIATE, IN BRACKETS]

COMMENTS: No comments

Performance Indicator 1.3 (Primary Indicator) Competitive Employment Outcomes (72.6%)

The percentage who exit the VR program in employment in integrated settings with or without ongoing support services, self-employment, or BEP (Business Enterprise Program) employment with hourly rate of earnings equivalent to at least the federal or state minimum wage rate, whichever is higher, based on all the individuals exiting the program who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services.

COMMISSION COMMENTS [BRS RESPONSE, AS APPROPRIATE, IN BRACKETS]

COMMENTS: No comments

Performance Indicator 1.4 (Primary Indicator)

Significance of Disability (62.4%)

COMMISSION COMMENTS [BRS RESPONSE, AS APPROPRIATE, IN BRACKETS]

COMMENTS: No comments

Performance Indicator 1.5 (Primary Indicator)

Earnings Ratio (.52)

The ratio of the average hourly earnings of all individuals in competitive employment to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the state

COMMISSION COMMENTS [BRS RESPONSE, AS APPROPRIATE, IN BRACKETS]

COMMENTS: No comments

Performance Indicator 1.6

Self-Support (53.0)

For those identified in Performance Indicator 1.3, the difference in the percentage of individuals who at program entry reported their income as the largest single source of support, and the percentage that reported their personal income as the largest single source of support at program exit.

COMMISSION COMMENTS [BRS RESPONSE, AS APPROPRIATE, IN BRACKETS]

COMMENTS: One of the big issues facing persons with disabilities achieving employment that can lead to the ability to be self-supporting is a trend we see becoming more prevalent, unemployed or underemployed undergraduate degree holders. The bachelor's degree is the new high school diploma, and leads to jobs in fast food restaurants, retail, construction, and low level service entry jobs. Gone are the days when having an undergraduate, non-licensure degree, led to significant income opportunities. Persons with disabilities are closed out of many entry level jobs because of physical or opportunity limitations, or just the availability. Offering limited educational programs through our VR services will not be the way to help persons with disabilities earn a competitive self-sustaining income.

We need to look at individuals and their specific needs on a case by case basis. I know that VR educational assistance is not available to those persons who have undergraduate degrees. Some people need to further their education past the bachelor's degree in order to be able to be competitive in the work place. Specifically those persons whose disabilities manifested after their initial educational goals were met. I can think of many instances where someone with a disability may even have a graduate degree, but are unable to do their previous career and need to be retrained. In order to make a person competitive in the workplace they have to have an edge, and frankly we are not providing this to our clientele. Having a hard and fast rule about qualifying for services based on what kind of degree or lack of degree you have only serves to assure outcomes won't ever measure up to persons with a disabilities being able to adequately support themselves and their families.

The percentage of people with disabilities in competitive employment with their own income as primary source of support has fallen. Many VR applicants are recipients of Medicaid and/or SSDI or SSI. They have a fear of losing their benefits, especially medical benefits if they try to obtain or reenter a job. Many people prefer to work a part time job in order to maintain SSA benefits. Many available jobs do not offer benefits or medical insurance and people do not want to take that "risk" of being without those supports. The Benefits Information Network (BIN) and the Community Work Incentive Coordinators are underutilized. They can assist the applicant in understanding how going to work will impact benefits and explain the incentives

that are available to return to work. For others who attempt to work but may not succeed, issues such as lack of transportation, lack of on the job training and other support services are typical barriers.

Better branding by not only VR, but service providers will aid in increasing Federal Performance Indicator 1.6. I believe that a shift in perception of the general population abilities of people with disabilities will aid in an increased reliance on household income earned by people with disabilities. This shift in perception will need to occur not only in the general population, but also in the minds of a large number of people living with disabilities; so many people do not have any idea of their potential. This is where educating citizens with disabilities as to their capabilities can make a difference.

[BRS Response: VR looks at all individuals on a case-by-case basis and determines an appropriate employment goal for each individual. Training is always an option for consumers as it relates to a needed and necessary service for achievement of their employment goals. Additionally, with respect to post-secondary services and policies, a workgroup has been established to assist in drafting rules. The workgroup includes membership of a variety of stakeholders including the Client Assistance Program.

BRS outreach and education efforts will continue to educate consumers and families about benefits. VR actually experienced an increase in the number of individuals receiving BIN services in FFY13 compared to FFY12. In FFY13, VR funded 1,325 individuals in receiving BIN services, compared to 1,191 in FFY12.]

Performance Indicator 2.1

Minority Background Service Rate (.80 Ratio)

The ratio of the percent of individuals with a minority background to the percent of individuals without a minority background exiting the program who received VR services

COMMISSION COMMENTS [BRS RESPONSE, AS APPROPRIATE, IN BRACKETS]

COMMENTS: While this outcome was exceeded, it was exceeded by very little. This goal will require continued efforts to reach all that are in need of services.

[BRS Response: BRS understands the importance of continued outreach and education to individuals with minority backgrounds. The Business & Community Engagement team members have attended events that are targeted to various minority groups with the hope of educating the groups about services they may be eligible to receive. Some examples of these activities include attending Native American Professionals event, Exodus Refugee & Immigrant Services, and the Catholic Archdiocese Refugee Services. These efforts can and should grow across the state in 2015.]

Overall Performance

COMMISSION COMMENT [BRS RESPONSE, AS APPROPRIATE, IN BRACKETS]

COMMENTS: In general, we must lay a more comprehensive infrastructure in our VR services to help persons with disabilities obtain competitive integrated self supporting careers. We may need to adjust our focus to look at achieving career goals not just job goals. It is just semantics, but we have got to change our own perceptions to see ourselves as career seeking potential employees to be taken more seriously in the work world. Sometimes we are all too eager to allow persons who provide services to us to “take charge” and decide what is best for those of us who live with these various disabilities. The result of this abdication is to allow persons who do not have challenges to actually discount participation in the process.

Our state needs to move along further to include in our RFPs and even hiring practices giving weight to awarding contracts and even jobs to those persons with disabilities. If our goal is to get the general population to celebrate the diversity and contributions of persons with disabilities, then we need to model this behavior in our committees, agencies, and general meetings. If we want increase the value of persons with disabilities to the general public, then we have to show in real measures that we value persons with disabilities and the contributions they can make to society.

The Customer Satisfaction Survey should be offered in an electronic format: It is not certain if the survey has to be done through a state computer system or if a simple survey monkey can be offered, but an electronic option will aid in VR’s ability to gather data as well as aid in offering a wider variety of accessible options of survey completion to consumers.

[BRS Response: The VR customer satisfaction survey system was completely revamped in 2013. Not only was the survey revised, but so also was the survey dissemination process. The response rates were greatly increased with the new approach. Whereas the previous survey garnered 1868 survey responses over the final 14 months of dissemination, the new survey collected 2,799 in its first twelve months (2,209 from successful case closures and 690 from unsuccessful case closures). This 50% increase in the number of responses transpired at the same time the number of successful and unsuccessful case closures dropped by over 12%, clearly indicating that the new methodology was effective in achieving a much higher response rate. BRS will explore additional options for distribution and collection of customer satisfaction surveys as necessary such as consideration for a web survey in the future. If implemented and a person has e-mail, this could become the first means of contact followed by mail.]

COMMENT: With a population of roughly 6.5 million Hoosier residents, there is a very high percentage of Indiana residents who have disabilities that do not know of the great services that can be offered to them by VR. This would involve a concerted effort as well as State financial backing to enhance the branding of VR as well as bring the message to all Indiana communities. It is uncertain about the State’s restrictions on marketing as it pertains to

advertisement, but we will need to provide all types of media to best penetrate various communities. Targeted marketing with an emphasis on abilities of people with disabilities will, in opinion, help with the State's culture as it is related to employing this diverse population. Of course, enhanced marketing will result in higher numbers of people with disabilities served by VR. This will result in a need to hire additional Counselors and Administrative Personnel.

[BRS Response: BRS has developed a new Business and Community Engagement 'team' to look at VR re-branding efforts that includes appropriate outreach and education to increase appropriate referrals. BRS is exploring various mediums in order to assist in educating potential consumers and important stakeholders. Specifically, BRS is using social media and video modules to assist in this effort. The VR "re-branding" project is a significant part of the team's outreach strategy. The intent is to build on an effort that begins with meeting and educating groups within the communities that may be in contact with potential VR consumers. Building recognition of the BRS/VR name at a more accelerated pace across the State will only help to increase referrals. Also, it is important to remember the increase of awareness expands to employers. Branding should be targeted specifically to employers throughout the State to increase their awareness of the ability of persons with disabilities as well as the supports that VR can provide to employees on the job. Employers are partners and customers of ours who need specific, targeted attention.]

COMMENT: The State should allocate funds to be able to draw down on the additional \$14 million that Indiana returned to the RSA. Some of this funding could be allocated to marketing as well as new and innovative Programs to serve people with disabilities.

[BRS Response: BRS is currently investigating strategies to reinvest resources in a way that will assist the program in meeting its goals and priorities, and expand service provision to an increased number of VR eligible consumers. Any new initiatives and strategies will need to be implemented thoughtfully and gradually. Unused VR federal dollars in Indiana are re-allotted through a federal re-allotment process and used to support other VR programs across the nation, and therefore other individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment outcomes.]

COMMENT: There should be increased collaboration among VR and service providers in the state of Indiana as it pertains to marketing. If every human service provider who acts as a vendor would be willing to take VR marketing materials along with them on their outreach efforts this could be a powerful tool in helping to get the word out about the services offered by, not only our own programs, but those offered by Vocational Rehabilitation.

[BRS Response: BRS is collaborating with CRPs to ensure that a consistent message is shared with respect to VR policies and services. Marketing materials and cross trainings are being planned to continue.]

COMMENT: Statistics provided to the Commission indicate that that there are fewer individuals assigning their Ticket (TTW) to VR in the 2 categories of customer groupings but about the same

number of SSI/SSDI recipients seeking services. The SSA Ticket to Work program and the work incentives available through this program need to be explained in detail to VR applicants.

[BRS Response: While tickets for some VR eligible consumers are assigned to VR, others are kept 'in use.' Consumers with tickets 'in use' are encouraged to assign their tickets to another Employment Network (EN) after VR closure under the SSA TTW 'Partnership Plus' Program. Federal performance indicators 1.1 and 1.6 are affected by the low numbers from specific regions bringing down the overall percentages in 2012-2013.]

State Plan Goals and Needs Assessment Focus Areas

The Commission also had opportunity to review and comment on state plan goals and results of the triennial needs assessment. The Commission offered the following comments in response to a finding in the needs assessment that identified a need to focus on transition efforts:

COMMISSION COMMENT [BRS RESPONSE, AS APPROPRIATE, IN BRACKETS]

COMMENT: Student applications have remained constant from 2011-2013 however the Commission has commented on several occasions that VR is absent at many secondary case conference committee meetings for youth who are nearing transition. Should these numbers be going up if "transition" is a primary focus area of the triennial plan?

[BRS Response: Quality services for transition-age students continues to remain a priority for VR. It is important to understand that while attending case conferences is an important part of assisting the transition-aged students; this involvement in case conferences needs to be purposeful and meaningful for the student and his/her family. VR is focused on identifying better ways to do purposeful outreach and education for all potential students. Strategies under serious consideration include work experience, internships, and increasing education to students, families, and school personnel. It is important that educational professionals understand VR's scope of services and processes in order to meet their responsibilities in ensuring a seamless transition process. Educating students and families about the importance of setting employment expectations for all youth, including youth with disabilities is critical.]

A SHARED VISION WITH VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES
Focusing on Long-Term Employment Success for Hoosiers with Disabilities
In Partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation Services

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR) AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (SE) GOALS

The goals and priorities are based on the comprehensive statewide assessment, on requirements related to the performance standards and indicators, and on other information about the state agency. As a part of the State Plan, this information should be updated when there are material changes in the information that require the information to be amended.

As outlined in section 101(a)(15)(C) of the Act, the goals and priorities:

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

The goals and priorities identified below were developed in concert with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) (Indiana's Commission on Rehabilitation Services). To enable the SRC to provide meaningful feedback and suggestions, each Commission meeting includes a BRS Director's Update to ensure that they remain informed throughout the year.

The SRC participates in a state plan development meeting at the beginning of each year to work with key BRS staff that are developing specific state plan documents. This meeting includes review of the Goals and Priorities state plan attachment. As the state plan undergoes various stages of revision, it continues to be shared with the SRC as well as BRS staff. Prior to public hearings, each Commission member receives the draft state plan and is asked to provide feedback. A representative from the Client Assistance Program (CAP) is represented on the SRC.

Input from CRPs, and other key stakeholders is also considered in development of goals and priorities. Additionally, all information from assessments, appeals, and public input guides BRS in developing the goals and priorities. An evaluation of BRS' performance on standards and indicators over the past few years was also considered in development of the State Plan goals and priorities.

AGENCY GOAL: TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN INTEGRATED, COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT

OBJECTIVE A: BRS will collaborate with state and local partners that also serve individuals with disabilities to increase appropriate VRS applicants.

Priority 1. Conduct outreach activities to increase knowledge and awareness of VRS and ensure that VR services are available to all eligible individuals who require them.

Measure. BRS will experience at least a 2% increase in VRS applicants from the prior year. (FFY13: 13,081)

2014 OUTCOME: VRS served 12,238 applicants in FFY14, which is a decrease from the prior year. VRS experienced an overall decrease in number of consumers served in FFY14, largely due to staff turnover including a high number of retirements. When VRS experiences a high number of vacancies, outreach efforts diminish and the timeframe for processing referrals increases.

Priority 2. BRS, in cooperation with the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services (BDDS), will continue to provide and enhance a seamless service delivery system for consumers transitioning into BRS services, then from BRS Services to Extended services.

Measure: BRS will see a 2% increase in employment outcomes for individuals with a primary impairment of a cognitive disability from the prior FFY. (FFY13: 1,354)

2014 OUTCOME: 1251 individuals with a cognitive impairment achieved a successful employment outcome in FFY14, which represents a decrease in the number of individuals with cognitive disabilities obtaining a successful outcome. However, there was an overall decrease in both consumers served as well as successful employment outcomes from the prior year.

Priority 3: Identify 2-4 specific partners for collaboration and targeted outreach to populations who may benefit from VR services.

Measure: BRS will conduct or participate in 20 or more targeted education and outreach activities in FFY15 (i.e. agency/bureau cross training event, outreach to parent advocacy organizations).

2014 OUTCOME: To date, BRS has participated in more than 75 targeted outreach activities with the BRS Director, the State Transition Coordinator and also the participation of Region

Mangers. There has been significant and targeted outreach efforts throughout FFY14, with the focus on school transition and resource fairs, presentations to special education parent groups, stakeholder groups, i.e., ICASE (Indiana Council of Administrators of Special Education) and INSOURCE (Parent Organization for children with disabilities). The events ranged from webinars, podcasts, 'meet and greets' of local agencies within state government, and attendance at those aforementioned outreach events within the communities we serve. The Outreach strategy FFY15 is to expand upon outreach efforts that began in FFY14 including the increased participation of the Regional and Area offices within the communities we serve. This presence of staff within the communities will help to further develop those critical relationships that will cultivate and increase the education about VR services within those local areas.

OBJECTIVE B: Indiana BRS will increase the quantity and quality of job placements.

Priority 1. BRS will develop state and local strategies to improve services provided to transition aged youth, e.g. internships/work experiences while still in high school.

Measure: BRS will experience at least a 2% increase in transition aged applicants to VRS compared to the prior year. (FFY13: 4,063).

2014 OUTCOME: Data is being compiled for FFY14; however, BRS anticipates an increase in transition-aged applicants.

Priority 2. BRS will implement a process for increasing accountability of CRPs to improve the quality of employment services and outcomes.

Measure: A process for increasing CRP accountability will be implemented by July 2015.

2014 OUTCOME – BRS has implemented a formal provider application process. As part of this process, providers will need to relay information pertaining to staff qualifications, training, accreditation, specialty services provided, coverage area, and other information that will be documented in a database. All community rehabilitation providers are expected to have signed agreements in place by July 1, 2015, upon BRS approval of their applications.

Priority 3. BRS, with input from CRPs and other stakeholders, will conduct a review of VRS employment services rates. Necessary modifications will be made to ensure that the employment services model and rate structure supports the provision of quality services and employment outcomes.

Measure: Recommendations for employment services rate restructuring will be implemented on or before July 2015.

2014 OUTCOME: This project is well underway and modifications continue to be targeted for a July 1, 2015 implementation. BRS has been working closely with the rate reform workgroup over the past year, and the revised employment services model was released for public

comment. BRS is working to finalize the revisions, and continues to seek stakeholder input on the design as well as implementation of the new model.

Priority 4. BRS will continue to work closely with the Blind and Visually Impaired Services (BVIS) through the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) to expand employment opportunities.

Measure: The employment rate for BEP trainees will at a minimum meet the federal rehabilitation rate indicator of 55.8%.

2014 OUTCOME: There was no BEP training class held in FFY14, however there were five graduates from BEP training in FFY13. Two of the five graduates were placed in FFY13 and the remaining three graduates were placed in FFY14 for an overall 100% placement rate.

OBJECTIVE C: BRS will develop program initiatives and training that adequately supports staff in the provision of quality services.

Priority 1. BRS will make progress toward the development of a web-based VRS case management system to improve efficiency and enhance the mobile working environment of VR field staff.

Measure: Requirements will be gathered for a new, web-based case management system with targeted implementation during FFY15.

2014 OUTCOME: The new case management system continues to be targeted for implementation in FFY15. The system will be piloted during the first quarter of the 2015 calendar year.

Priority 2. BRS will identify an improved system for the provision and identification of professional development and training for staff, i.e. new VR Counselor training.

Measure: BRS will explore options for staff professional development and identify a proposed solution by May 2015.

2014 OUTCOME: BRS has increased training opportunities for staff including conducting a 2-day statewide symposium in September 2014. BRS is in process of scheduling training on VR Counseling and Guidance in the early part of 2015.

Priority 3: BRS in collaboration with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) and BVIS will provide necessary training and technical assistance to VR counselors who have a specialized caseload serving individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, and individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Measure: Quarterly meetings/trainings will be held with specialty VR Counselors, facilitated by DHHS and BVIS staff. The first meeting/training for FFY15 will be completed by fall 2014.

Agenda's will be set based on training and discussion needs identified by VR Specialty Counselors and their Supervisors.

2014 OUTCOME: Quarterly meetings occurred throughout FFY14.

Priority 4. BRS, along with providers, INARF, other state agencies (i.e. Department of Mental Health and Addiction (DMHA)), and other stakeholders will facilitate cross training opportunities for VRS and provider staff to clarify VRS policies and practices and enhance consistency in service delivery.

Measure: A minimum of three formal cross-training events will occur during FFY15.

2014 OUTCOME: Outcome to be reported next year. BRS is planning a major cross-training with providers and BRS staff in the spring 2015.

FOCUS 2015

Throughout 2015 the Commission will continue to develop mechanisms to ensure public participation in meetings. The dates, times, and locations of the meetings are posted on the Commission's website, and each meeting is also posted at the meeting location with 48 hours notice in accordance with the open door law. Each Commission agenda includes a standard time for open forum comments from the public.

In addition, the Commission has developed a list of guest presentations to ensure that there will be a guest presentation at each meeting. The scheduled presentations will provide a shared opportunity for greater collaboration between the Commission and other agencies and organizations. This will expand the Commission's knowledge and enhance awareness of the Commission.

Positive measures continue to be initiated by the Commission to ensure that the Commission's duties and functions are achieved, consistent with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act. In 2014, various Commission members attended meetings and conferences. Conferences included the Governor's Council for People with Disabilities, the Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, the Arc of Indiana, Indiana Association for Higher Education and Disabilities, the IN Council for the Blind Conference, and the Brain Injury Association of Indiana. These events provided an opportunity to expand awareness of the Commission and Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and in some instances included the distribution of information. The Commission will ensure wider general distribution of the Commission brochure at conferences and in the community in 2015.

In addressing the status of the BRS program, the Commission recognizes that Indiana's BRS has undertaken many important initiatives during the past year and continues to build on these accomplishments. The Commission enjoys a very positive working relationship with BRS and supports their efforts to improve consumer services and the service delivery system.

Through the establishment of committees, the Commission members have been able to more clearly focus on specific issues in a timely manner. The Commission will annually examine the effectiveness of the current committees and will then determine the need for changes in committee functions and/or the inclusion or discontinuance of specific committees.

As the Commission looks to the future, its members will work in partnership with BRS to develop, agree to, and review the BRS goals and priorities. During federal fiscal year 2015, the Commission will continue to focus attention on consumer satisfaction and outreach efforts and an increased public awareness of the Commission and opportunities for consumer participation on the Commission. Measures will be taken to enhance the visibility of the Commission and BRS and provide linkages to other agencies and programs, resulting in greater public awareness of BRS programs.

OUTREACH

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services recognizes the importance of outreach activities throughout the state, which have included networking with governor-appointed boards, councils, and commissions, as well as other agencies and organizations. Appropriate steps were taken to ensure Commission member representation at conferences throughout the year to include events hosted by: the Governor's Council for People with Disabilities; the Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities; and the Brain Injury Association of Indiana.

Each year the Commission develops a new work plan for outreach which includes the identification of major training events. For FFY 2015, the Commission members will attend the Indiana Governor's Conference for People with Disabilities, the Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities Conference, and the Brain Injury Association of Indiana Conference. Additional events and conferences may be added to the work plan as information becomes available.

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services welcomes your opinion about how BRS is meeting your needs and employment goals. The information collected will help the Commission and BRS to improve services and expand employment opportunities for all Hoosier's with disabilities.

Please contact us if you would like to:

- Learn more about the Commission
- Share your ideas
- Attend a Commission meeting
- Be considered for appointment to the Commission

You may contact the Commission by telephone, mail, e-mail, or by visiting our Web site.

All contact information is on the back of this publication.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

•INDIANA COMMISSION

The Commission is the advisory board for Indiana's Vocational Rehabilitation Services, which serves thousands of citizens with disabilities each year through vocational rehabilitation, employment, education and independent living in the community.

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Indiana's Commission on Rehabilitation Services is a member of the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC).

The NCSRC is a national organization comprised of State Rehabilitation Councils (SRCs) throughout the United States that work in partnership with the public vocational rehabilitation program to represent the consumer voice in enhancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

NCSRC website: www.ncsrc.net