

Proposed Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

This plan outlines strategies to update staff credentials so that all staff meets the highest academic standard for their profession. The in-service training unit of CBVH coordinates and evaluates all training programs attended by staff. All in-service training records are maintained electronically in a Microsoft Access program. A training file is maintained for each staff member containing: name, title, phone number, date hired, district office, college major, highest degree earned, a note section to track courses needed (if necessary), Certification or Certification eligible, and in-service training programs attended. CBVH can thus easily access data regarding staff credentials and CRC eligibility or status.

Number of Personnel Employed

As of January 1, 2013 CBVH employees totaled 135 individuals in seven district offices and the home office. There were an additional 17 vacancies. The total number of field staff was 67, with 12 positions vacant. Approximately 4,400 legally blind individuals are "active" on VRCs' caseloads at any given time. The average caseload is 61 consumers per VRC upstate, and 72 consumers per VRC downstate. The discrepancy in caseload sizes from upstate to downstate is due to the concentrated number of consumers in the downstate area.

Of the 50 Senior VRC and VRCs in field staff positions, 47 are Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC) or CRC eligible. Two VRCs have reached retirement age, and have elected not to upgrade their credentials. One individual opted not to establish a training plan and has elected not to upgrade his credentials. They will receive Sr. VRC sign-off prior to establishing eligibility, signing the IPE (including any amendments and the annual IPE review) and closing the cases.

CBVH's current staffing allows CBVH to effectively provide services to all individuals who apply for and are determined eligible for VR services. CBVH is aware that many professional staff intend to retire within the next five years.

The result of personnel transactions for fiscal year 2011 as they affected each district office is as follows:

Buffalo - one Rehabilitation Teacher position is vacant, one District Manager position is vacant, and one Senior Counselor position is vacant. One VR-Children's Consultant was hired.

Syracuse - one Orientation and Mobility position is vacant, one District Manager position is vacant and two VR counselor positions are vacant. One VR-Children's Consultant was hired.

Albany - one Senior Counselor position is vacant. One District Manager was hired and one Vision Rehabilitation Therapist was hired.

White Plains - one VR counselor was hired.

Manhattan - one Senior Counselor position is vacant. One VR counselor was hired

Hempstead - one Orientation and Mobility Instructor was hired.

Harlem – one VR counselor position vacant.

CBVH is requesting budgetary approval to fill all of the vacant positions. CBVH must seek NYS Division of the Budget approval for a waiver from the ongoing state hiring freeze in order to hire any personnel.

Staff Five Year Projections

CBVH estimates that by the year 2018, 27 current VRCs and Senior VRCs will be age 55 or older and eligible to retire. Many of those within retirement age, however, will not have enough time in service to retire at age 55 and will retire at a later time. In using age 57 as a likely retirement age, we estimate that some employees who are older than 57 will remain employed by CBVH, and other VRCs, under age 57, may be promoted or leave for other reasons. Using this analysis of potential retirees and staff leaving for other reasons, we estimate that 26 VRCs and Senior VRCs will leave CBVH in the next 5 years. 21 of the 22 VRCs and Sr. VRCs expected to remain will be CRC or CRC eligible. The person ineligible for CRC status will be unable to perform the non-delegable functions of the VRC.

Using the same formula, it is estimated that four of the seven O&M instructors and RTs will retire or leave for other reasons. All vacancies in the O&M and RT disciplines are expected to be replaced.

There are 49 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions, five are vacant, CBVH projects 24 vacancies over the next five years.

There are nine Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions, three are vacant, CBVH projects seven vacancies over the next five years.

There are six Orientation and Mobility Instructor positions, one is vacant, CBVH projects four vacancies over the next five years.

There are three Vision Rehabilitation Therapist positions, one is vacant, CBVH projects 0 vacancies over the next five years.

Data on Personnel Development

CBVH maintains contact with the three colleges and universities in the state that prepare vocational rehabilitation counselors as a source for CBVH staff positions. In addition, CBVH continues to work closely with the colleges to develop a process for the recruitment of students from diverse populations, and to establish a curriculum based on best practices, research, and development trends.

For the calendar year beginning January 2011 and ending December 2011, the colleges reported the enrollment outlined in the table below.

Note: Hunter College of CUNY is the only university preparation program in New York State graduating O&M instructors and VRTs. Graduates from this program are eligible for certification by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP).

Institution – Hofstra
Students Enrolled – 51
Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA – 0
Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA – 0
Graduates from previous year – 15

Institution – Hunter College of the City of New York
Students Enrolled – 82
Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA – 2
Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA – 18
Graduates from previous year – 24

Institution – State University of New York at Buffalo
Students Enrolled – 92
Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA – 0
Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA – 0
Graduates from previous year – 22

Institution – Hunter College CUNY O&M/RT
Students Enrolled – 17
Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA – 1
Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA – 6
Graduates from previous year – 6

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation, and Retention of Qualified Personnel

The following steps describe the ongoing activities that will enable CBVH to continue the long-term CSPD plan and develop resources needed to recruit, prepare and retain qualified personnel in New York State:

1. Maintain relationships established with the Regional Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE), the VR counseling pre-service preparation

programs in NYS, pre-service O&M and RT programs, and long distance learning pre-service programs from other states.

2. Continue to track the number of students who graduate from pre-service programs statewide and the percentage of diverse populations (e.g. severely disabled, Latino) within those programs.
3. Continue to develop relationships with distance learning programs to locate curricula that meet the learning styles and needs of CBVH staff. These include video conferencing, videotapes, and/or computer technology.
4. Increase opportunities for staff in-service training.
5. Maintain a training database for all CBVH staff that includes the following information: CRC status, educational history, proficiency areas (sign language, foreign language), training priority requests, graduate course work.
6. Continue to recruit qualified VRCs, O&Ms, and RTs including those from diverse backgrounds or who have needed language skills.
7. Continue to partner with ACCES-VR (formerly VESID) with regard to the CSPD and the long term training of employees.
8. Provide financial stipends to masters level college students who complete an internship program at CBVH as part of their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor program.
9. Collaborate with colleges and universities to train Orientation and Mobility Specialists and Vision Rehabilitation Therapists. Graduates will qualify for national certification through the ACVREP or the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB). CBVH and stakeholders have been meeting with officials from the University at Buffalo to establish a certificate training program in Orientation and Mobility. The certificate program would be the first of its kind and graduates would be eligible for certification by the ACVREP.

Personnel Standards

Highest Standard for VRCs

CBVH hires only individuals who meet the New York State Department of Civil Service's personnel standard for vocational rehabilitation counselors. The standard is:

- A. A current Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC certificate); OR
- B. A master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, including a supervised internship, from a Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) accredited program; OR

- C. A master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or Counseling and notice of academic eligibility for the CRCC certificate examination.

Plans to Retrain Staff Who Do Not Meet the Highest Requirements

Staff who do not meet the highest academic standards will either have a training plan in place or they will require supervisory approval prior to establishing eligibility, signing the IPE or determining case closure.

CBVH is not allowed by the NYS Department of Civil Service to hire new staff in VR Counselor positions who do not meet the personnel standard.

Staff Development

The CBVH in-service training program funds attendance at workshops, conferences, formal course work, and agency developed training sessions, and TACE developed or sponsored training and conferences. Training has been offered in counseling, rehabilitation, medical aspects of disability, job placement, rehabilitation technology, cultural diversity, informed choice, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, and other topics related to vocational rehabilitation. CBVH contracts with six Adaptive Technology Centers in the state. Upon request, the centers provide training to CBVH staff on new access technology for individuals with disabilities.

Information gained by staff attending conferences or training is shared at staff meetings with local staff. District managers share the information with senior staff at bi-weekly conference calls and quarterly meeting of district managers and information is disseminated to all staff as appropriate. Papers, articles and studies received in the home office who are responsible for the content areas.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

CBVH continues to obtain the services of individuals able to communicate in the native language of individuals who have limited English speaking ability or require American Sign Language. Qualified interpreters are hired for services for individuals who are deaf-blind or who require in-person language interpretation. CBVH staff with the required qualifications may be used for this purpose, or sub-contractors with specialty skills may be used.

CBVH also uses the Language Line telephone interpretation services program that offers interpretation services in over 170 languages.

Coordination of CSPD with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

CBVH is not responsible for hiring staff who work in school systems - that is the responsibility of the New York State Education Department, the New York state agency that administers both the vocational rehabilitation program for individuals with disabilities other than legal blindness as well as special education programs for school-age children. The CSPD functions for both areas are carried out within ACCES-VR's Office of Program Development and Support Services (PDSS), in collaboration with

other ACCES-VR organizational units. The CBVH CSPD was developed by a workgroup, which included representatives of both ACCES-VR and CBVH.