

Proposed

Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

As noted in Attachment 4.11(c)(1) State's Goals and Priorities, CBVH, working with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), updated the goals and priorities that were developed for the 2013 State Plan. The goal of increasing the number of competitive closures remains as a goal for this State Plan so that CBVH can continue to measure program service effectiveness. The goal of increasing the number of individuals from ethnic and racial minority populations also remains a goal for the 2014 State Plan because many stakeholders have indicated that there continues to be a need for CBVH to address this goal. These goals and priorities have been developed using feedback from CBVH workgroups, the Executive Board, the State Rehabilitation Council, participant input from CBVH open forums, the results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment and CBVH administrative priorities.

Goal 1: Increase the number of competitive employment outcomes using Fiscal Year 2012 data on the number of competitive employment outcomes as a baseline.

Strategies

1. Increase and document outreach efforts to employers to make them aware of the skills and abilities of individuals who are blind and to develop partnerships.
2. Continue to work with the National Employment Team (NET) of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and other employment networks to improve employment options for CBVH consumers.
3. Work to build partnerships with America's Job Centers and Local Workforce Investment Boards to increase access to needed services by CBVH consumers.
4. Develop additional vocational training programs that meet the needs of consumers and businesses.
5. Develop working relationships with agencies that typically serve individuals with disabilities other than blindness.
6. Support and promote the Business Enterprise Program in the implementation of the expanded state legislative priority in order to increase employment opportunities and successful outcomes.
7. Expand availability of Benefits Advisement services to CBVH consumers through Independent Living Centers and other qualified entities with the goal of increasing the number of individuals seeking employment goals, including full time employment.
8. Work with National Industries for the Blind in developing competitive integrated employment opportunities in the Service sector.

Goal 2: Increase the number of individuals from ethnic and racial minority populations and other unserved and underserved groups who receive services using Fiscal Year 2012 as a baseline.

Strategies

1. Continue to promote CBVH services to the populations identified in the 2013 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) as underserved.
2. Continue activities to provide additional and improved services to minority populations. In addition, CBVH will continue its efforts to diversify its staff and provide cultural competency training to new staff.
3. Increase the availability of services to minority populations by providing access to information in different languages. Also, improve consumer access to English as a Second Language training programs, vocational training programs, job placement services and education services.
4. Continue to develop working relationships with culturally specific community-based organizations such as literacy programs, faith based organizations, service groups and community action programs. Continue to encourage CBVH staff to attend community cultural events as a way to expand awareness of CBVH services.
5. Expand outreach efforts to specific underserved populations identified by each CBVH district.

Goal 3: Continue to pass the RSA Standards and Indicators.

RSA Standards and Indicators – In addition to implementing the strategies listed below, CBVH notes that progress toward achieving Goals 1 and 2 and the implementation of their accompanying strategies will positively impact CBVH’s performance on the Standards and Indicators.

1.1: Change in Number of Employment Outcomes - The number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the current performance period compared to the number of individuals who exited the VR program after achieving an employment outcome during the previous period.

1.2: Percent Employed - Of all individuals who exit the VR program after receiving services, the percentage that are determined to have achieved an employment outcome.

1.3: Employed Competitively - Of all individuals determined to have achieved an employment outcome, the percentage who exit the VR program in competitive, self- or business enterprise program (BEP) employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage.

1.4: Significant Disability - Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the percentage who are individuals with significant disabilities.

1.5: Earnings Ratio - The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings levels equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to the State's average hourly earnings for all individuals in the State who are employed (as derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics report "State Average Annual Pay" for the most recent available year).

1.6: Self-Support - Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the difference between the percentage who report their own income as the largest single source of economic support at the time they exit the VR program and the percentage who report their own income as the largest single source of support at the time they apply for VR services.

2.1: Ratio Minority - The service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all non-minority individuals with disabilities.

Strategies

1. CBVH will continue to work with district office staff to obtain accurate data in our Case Information System (CIS).
2. CBVH will continue to make enhancements to CIS to assist with accurate data collection.
3. Encourage the use of benefits advisement to help improve consumer's earnings and CBVH performance on indicators 1.5 and 1.6.
4. Evaluate the results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment to better serve individuals who are at risk for unsuccessful closure.

Goal 4: Improve services to individuals who are deaf-blind.

Strategies

1. Continue to implement recommendations from the Deaf-Blind Needs Assessment which are within the purview of CBVH.
 - a. Review and update the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ACCES-VR, for serving individuals who are deaf-blind, as necessary.
 - b. Explore development of additional programs and services to meet the needs of individuals who are deaf-blind and advocate for appropriate community resources to meet the needs of individuals who are deaf-blind.
2. With the Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities, examine the deaf-blind population served by that agency and the issues faced by this population, and develop opportunities for service collaboration.

3. Continue membership on the Interagency Coordinating Council for Services to Persons Who Are Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing and continue to actively work with the Council to address its work plan and priorities.

Goal 5: Support teaching functional Braille to adults for daily living and employment activities.

Strategies

1. Revise Vision Rehabilitation Therapy Progress Report forms in the CBVH case management system to enable CBVH to more easily track Braille instruction.
2. Continue to encourage counselors to discuss the value and benefit of learning functional Braille skills with consumers.
3. Recruit prospective students to enroll in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy programs in order to increase the availability of Braille instruction.

Goal 6: Increase awareness of CBVH services in the statewide business community.

Strategies

1. Promote business awareness of CBVH workforce programs and business services through print, broadcast and electronic media, and continue to promote awareness of CBVH through personal face-to-face contacts with businesses. Develop and implement local marketing plans in each CBVH district that encourage and strengthen partnerships between CBVH and community providers when creating business relationships.
2. Brand CBVH as part of CSAVR's National Employment Team (NET) which assures businesses that CBVH will understand and meet business's onboarding needs with the same level of consistency and quality as other NET member VR agencies across the country.
3. Assist businesses in finding employees who have the education, skills and abilities to meet business needs.
4. Enhance the information and resources for business that are available on CBVH website and promote the website link in all marketing efforts.

Provision of Assistive Technology Services

CBVH provides assistive technology services and devices to individuals during each stage of the rehabilitation process through assistive technology center (ATC) contracts and through private vendors. The new ATC contracts began in January 2013 and include a new outcome service, ATC Readiness Evaluation, in addition to the ATC Assessment and ATC Training outcome services and a number of fee based services. Training on the new contract guidelines is being provided to both CBVH staff and ATC staff. The outcome services provide a comprehensive and rigorous array of

assessments and training with the goal of preparing students for success in school and employment. Private vendors are also used to provide assistive technology training. A list of approved private vendors is posted on the CBVH website. Technology equipment is purchased based on recommendations from the ATC and approval by the counselor and district office supervisory staff and a review and approval by the home office technology consultant. The ATCs and private vendors are located across the state to allow easy access to the training statewide. Two CBVH loan closets also provide statewide access to loaner equipment while a consumer is awaiting delivery of equipment purchased for them for school or employment.

Establishing, Developing or Improving Community Rehabilitation Programs

As identified in the needs assessment, there does not appear to be a need to establish new community rehabilitation programs. However, the need to develop and improve existing community rehabilitation programs was identified. CBVH will work closely with community resources to:

1. Continue to improve the assistive technology services provided by contract agencies. CBVH issued an RFP for assistive technology center services in the Fall of 2012. The RFP included new standards for the provision of assistive technology services to CBVH consumers. There are three required outcomes in the new contract: Readiness Evaluation, Assessment, and Training. There is also an additional hourly service, Remote Technical Assistance, which allows the provider to troubleshoot problems from a distance.

These changes in the contract were developed through the efforts of a workgroup comprised of CBVH staff that met for an extended period. The group reviewed the existing standards; assessment and training programs in use by other state agencies; and the current skills demanded by educational institutions and business. CBVH also pilot tested a commercial product and reviewed a second commercial product. From the workgroup recommendations, CBVH developed an evaluation tool which will be administered both during the assessment phase and again at the end of training to determine whether the level of skill attained will enable the consumer to compete in school or at work. The new ATC standards became effective January 1, 2013.

2. Develop and implement new and innovative training and placement programs for consumers. CBVH is partnering with community rehabilitation programs to help them target growing job sectors and develop training programs to provide individuals with the appropriate skills to meet the needs of businesses in those sectors.
3. Improve and augment Comprehensive Services, Adaptive Technology, and Evaluation/Placement services. A joint CBVH/provider workgroup to discuss current practice and challenges in implementation of the Comprehensive Services Contract began meeting in January of 2011. The group, which consists

of senior counselors and agency program directors, will work on an ongoing basis to establish best practices, service provision and documentation.

4. Continue joint training initiatives with community contractor agencies. CBVH and the Region 2 TACE Center sponsored the annual Vision Rehabilitation and Employment Institute. Approximately 100 attendees participated in an array of workshops that related to Career Search, Landing a Job on the Phone, Consumers with Criminal Backgrounds, Work Readiness and Career Management.

CBVH's strategies assisting other components of the Statewide Workforce Investment system in serving disabilities assist CBVH in achieving its goals, support innovation and expansion and overcome barriers related to equitable access in a number of ways.

1. Efforts to connect with Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) in America's Job Centers and to participate in Local Workforce Investment Boards serve multiple purposes: connecting CBVH to businesses, promoting knowledge about CBVH and its services, and connecting job seekers to services at the job centers which may lead to more competitive outcomes.
2. Participation by CBVH staff in Chapter 515 meetings allows discussions among CBVH, ACCES-VR, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), and the Office of Mental Health (OMH) about the challenges facing mutual consumers including minorities and individuals who are deaf-blind and those in more isolated communities. The group works to achieve more effective transition from pre-employment programs to employment, identify barriers to participation in employment and distribute services to achieve equitable access. In planning and coordinating activities, including training, the group will help staff to increase skills needed to help consumers achieve integrated employment while increasing knowledge and access to each other's services.
3. By supporting increased use of benefits planning through Independent Living Services, DRC's and other qualified resources, CBVH anticipates that more consumers will choose careers, and work hours, which will allow them to go off SSA benefits and achieve economic self-sufficiency. In addition, CBVH is working with the Office of Mental Health to develop a Partnership Plus agreement with the OMH administered State Employment Network. This will increase opportunities for consumers to obtain continued support to maintain their jobs after case closure. CBVH works with ACCES-VR to allocate contract capacity for Supported Employment services to try to assure the services are available to any most significantly disabled individual seeking those services.

Innovation and Expansion Funds

CBVH plans to use Innovation and Expansion funds for the following projects in FY 2014.

1. Marketing materials – CBVH has contracted with a New York State based company to develop marketing materials to use as part of a variety of outreach initiatives. In FY 14, they will be developing brochures targeted to eye care professionals and the general public. This will enable CBVH to focus on two valuable referral sources.
2. Pre-College Programs – CBVH is contracting with two private agencies for the blind to provide pre-college programs for CBVH consumers entering their senior year of high school. The goal of the program is to provide students entering their senior year of high school the opportunity to refine their academic, social and independent living skills before beginning college. The programs will begin in the summer of 2013 and will continue for five consecutive summers. The students will be housed on a college campus for the five week program and will complete a non-credit “Introduction to College Life” course.
3. Benefits Advisement - CBVH is developing relationships with independent living centers (ILCs) and other entities with expertise in providing benefits advisement to individuals with disabilities. These ILCs and other providers are being approved to provide benefits advisement to CBVH consumers. CBVH is using the model that was developed by the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) projects and is promoting the use of benefits advisement for all CBVH consumers as appropriate. CBVH will use innovation and expansion funds to increase the use of benefits advisement with the goal of increasing employment outcomes for CBVH consumers.