

Overview

The Federal Rehabilitation Act provides funding for states to implement vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs. The purpose of these programs is to empower individuals with disabilities to maximize employment opportunities and achieve economic self-sufficiency and independence with the goal of full inclusion and integration into society. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services' Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH) is the agency designated in New York State to provide vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services to individuals who are legally blind. In order to receive funding under the Rehabilitation Act for vocational rehabilitation services, CBVH must submit a State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Services to the Rehabilitation Services Administration as well as annual updates to the plan.

This document provides the reader with proposed attachments for the CBVH 2011 State Plan. The State Plan is due on July 1, 2010. Attachments will be updated and comments received as a result of the Town Meetings will be reviewed and incorporated into the State Plan and its general activities, as appropriate.

PROPOSED ATTACHMENTS TO THE CBVH 2011 STATE PLAN

1. Attachment 4.8(b)(2)

COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

Formal Interagency Agreement with the State Educational Agency

Understanding the importance of interagency planning and the need to increase the availability, access and quality of transition services, CBVH continues to work with school districts as they develop and implement transition services. The Joint Agreement on the Provision of Transition Services, signed in 1993 by CBVH, the

Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) and the Office of Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education (EMS) in the State Education Department articulates the expected relationship between vocational rehabilitation and secondary education programs in New York State. The joint agreement covers the following:

1. Increasing successful transition outcomes;
2. Enhancing vocational assessments;
3. Implementing transition planning procedures; and,
4. Implementing functional referral criteria for schools to refer students to VESID and to CBVH.

Roles and Responsibilities

The joint agreement clarifies that school districts have the primary planning and programmatic responsibilities for the provision of transition services for their students in school. School districts are financially responsible for transition services mandated for school districts by Federal or State statutes and regulations. CBVH personnel currently have a consulting role with the schools to see that adult services are involved in the planning and decision-making process regarding transition services for students with disabilities. The transition services for youth are to be aligned with labor market needs and integrated community living opportunities, and coordinated with the adult world to facilitate employment, post-secondary education, and community living outcomes. CBVH may be consulted for vocational evaluation interpretation, occupational opportunities, decision making with the Committee on Special Education, coordination with adult services, peer counseling, role modeling and job placement analysis.

Consultation and Technical Assistance

CBVH staff is encouraged to consult with school personnel to assist in recommending assessment practices and interpreting results in relation to employment. CBVH counselors assist the school by identifying resources in the community that are familiar with blindness and that offer comprehensive assessments. As a participant in the school's transition process, CBVH staff is encouraged to contribute knowledge of rehabilitation services and outcomes, and to discuss post-school plans with the youth, family and school personnel.

Procedures for Outreach

A standardized process has been implemented for school district referrals. VESID and CBVH collaborate with school districts and other State agencies to facilitate a coordinated approach to the provision of transition services and to eliminate the duplication of assessment, services and reporting. The agreement specifically states that every student with a disability will receive comprehensive, coordinated educational services to prepare for employment, post-secondary education or community living when they leave school.

Plans, policies and procedures for coordination with education officials and roles and responsibilities of each agency:

The CBVH transition policy states that as a participant in the school's transition planning process, CBVH staff should contribute knowledge of rehabilitation services and outcomes, identify the need for involvement by other State agencies, adult service programs, independent living centers, and community based services whose resources can assist students who are legally blind, their families, and education personnel during the transition process. It also states that CBVH is responsible only for services written into the IEP by the Committee on Special Education with the direct knowledge and agreement of the CBVH counselor. Financial responsibility for services, other than those which are mandated for school districts by Federal or State statute or regulation, may be shared by other agencies, including CBVH.

Cooperative efforts between the schools and CBVH take place on a daily basis at the district office level. CBVH Children's Consultants provide schools with technical support, help parents learn to advocate effectively for their children, and purchase services to supplement those that school districts are required to provide. As the student nears transition age, the CBVH Children's Consultants' familiarity with particular students allows for a more effective transition to the vocational rehabilitation program. In cooperation with the school and community agencies, CBVH vocational rehabilitation counselors encourage and help individuals to live independently and develop meaningful employment plans. During school years, CBVH counselors can provide vocational guidance and counseling, resource information, and the preparation of post high school service plans. In addition, CBVH counselors may be able to provide job related occupational tools, purchase low vision aids, assist in obtaining employment and facilitate summer employment. CBVH currently employs eight vocational rehabilitation counselors who work exclusively with transition age youth. The transition counselors have provided educational guidance to CBVH vocational rehabilitation counselors and encouraged student and parent involvement in the transition process. Brochures describing CBVH services have been widely distributed. The brochures are available in regular print, large print and Braille (upon request) and electronically.

Provide for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment before school exit, also (3 b): transition planning by personnel that facilitates the development and completion of their IEP:

The 1993 agreement states that transition services and the agencies responsible for the provision of such services should be indicated on the Individual Education Plan (IEP) for all students with disabilities, ages 15 years or older. The CBVH Transition Policy recommends that the student's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) be developed, to the extent possible, during the annual review

of the transition component of the IEP. At that time, information required on the IPE should be consistent with the content of the IEP, including vocational goals, educational and rehabilitation objectives, projected dates and responsibilities for participation in the transition process. CBVH policy requires that an IPE be completed for each eligible student by the time the student graduates from high school. CBVH transition counselors have received training on this policy requirement and on the requirements of developing an IPE and coordinating the IPE with the IEP. All CBVH transition counselors have been actively developing employment plans for youth.

The New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative

The New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative (NYDBC) is a five-year federally funded project which provides technical assistance to improve services for children and youth who are deaf-blind (ages 0-21). The NYDBC is housed at Queens College in Flushing, New York and is funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). CBVH has agreed to collaborate on specific initiatives with NYDBC. Specifically, CBVH assisted NYDBC in disseminating a state wide needs assessment to increase the early identification of children who are deaf-blind in New York State. CBVH staff will also receive considerable technical assistance and training from NYDBC that will increase knowledge and skills in addressing the developmental and educational needs of children who are deaf-blind.

CBVH will also be involved in collaborative relationships with local, regional and statewide teams (as necessary) to support and improve systems to better serve children and youth.

Collaborative partnerships

CBVH is a partner in a demonstration called Project WORKS. Funded by the Social Security Administration, this youth initiative is designed to support the successful transition of youth with disabilities from school to post-secondary education and employment and maximize their economic self-sufficiency. The project focuses on developing services and service-delivery systems that will improve educational and employment outcomes for youth with disabilities. It is designed to increase coordination among public agencies and private organizations that have resources, funding and a mandate to provide transition services. New York State is one of six states participating in this project.

CBVH is also involved in the "Partnerships for Youth" projects funded through the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC). The five projects bring together school based programs with the One Stop service centers, employers, vocational rehabilitation and community based service providers to create a seamless transition process. Both rehabilitation agencies (CBVH and VESID) have traditionally played a major role in facilitating work

experience, mentoring, work-study and competitive employment. The work readiness and “soft skills” training provided by systems partners have been essential to facilitating successful work transition. The projects have demonstrated the necessity and importance of coordinated intervention services before the student leaves the educational system.

2. Attachment 4.10

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

This attachment describes the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), CBVH, system of personnel development to obtain an adequate supply of qualified professionals and paraprofessionals to provide vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to legally blind New Yorkers. As requested by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), this plan will focus on the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC), Senior VRC, Orientation and Mobility Specialist (O&M), and Vision Rehabilitation Therapist/Rehabilitation Teacher (RT) positions. The Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) plan was developed by a workgroup composed of representatives from CBVH and the New York State Education Department (SED) - Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) and is updated annually. It has been reviewed and commented on by the CBVH State Rehabilitation Council.

A. DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

1. Number of Personnel Employed

- a. As of August 31, 2008, CBVH employed a total of 52 individuals in field-based VRC and Senior VRC items. Two Sr. VRCs and one VRC positions are vacant and are expected to be filled when budgetary approval is received.

Approximately 3,300 legally blind individuals are "active" on VRCs' caseloads at any given time. The average caseload is 53 consumers per VRC upstate, and 70 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.

CBVH employs 6 O&M instructors and 2 RTs in field positions. One rehabilitation teacher retired and, because of the continuing shortage of qualified rehabilitation teachers, CBVH has been unable to fill the vacancy. CBVH intends to fill this position with an

individual who is certifiable as a rehabilitation teacher. Otherwise, this number has remained constant in recent years.

- b. Projected Needs: It is projected for the period of September 1, 2009 to August 31, 2010 that 5 VRCs and Senior VRCs will retire or leave or other reasons. The orientation and mobility instructor is expected to remain.
- c. Projections: Of the 52 Senior VRC and VRCs in field positions, 48 are Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC) or CRC eligible and 4 are not CRC eligible. Of the 4 who are not CRC eligible:
 - 1. three intend to retire;
 - 2. one continues to explore credentialing options.

CBVH estimates that all state unit personnel will meet the CSPD standard by the end of 2015.

All 6 O&M instructors earned Master's degrees and are eligible for certification from the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP). Of the 2 RTs, one has a Master's degree and one earned a Bachelor's degree. Both are eligible for certification from ACVREP.

- d. Several personnel transactions occurred during the period September 1, 2008 and August 31, 2009. The result of these transactions for the year as they affected each district office is as follows:

Buffalo

- No vacancies as of 8/31/09

Syracuse

- DM left
- Sr VRC promoted to DM
- One vacant VRC position as of 8/21/09

Albany

- DM retired
- Sr. VRC promoted to DM
- One vacant VRC and one vacant rehabilitation teacher position as of 8/31/09

White Plains

- One VRC hired
- DM retired
- One vacant DM position as of 8/31/09

New York City

- One DM vacancy as of 8/31/09

Hempstead

- Two VRCs retired
- One VRC hired
- One vacant VRC position as of 8/31/09

CBVH estimates that by the year 2014, 34 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. Due to the economic climate in the State, and declining resources in deferred compensation programs, some staff may also forego retirement to a later date. 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 32 VRCs and Senior VRCs will leave CBVH in the next 5 years. Of the 20 expected to remain, CBVH estimates only one VRC will not be CRC eligible without updating credentials. Using the same formula, it is estimated that 7 of the 8 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.

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.

CBVH's current staffing allows for CBVH to effectively provide services to all individuals who apply for and are determined eligible for VR services.

B. DATA ON PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

1. There are 3 institutions of higher education in New York State (NYS) accredited by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) that prepare Vocational Rehabilitation counseling professionals. In 2009, the programs at the University at Albany and Syracuse University closed. CBVH maintains contact with all of these institutions of higher education, assists in recruitment for the colleges and uses their students as a source for CBVH staff positions. Last year, the colleges reported the following enrollment information:

- Hofstra University
29 Students enrolled
13 Graduates last year
7 Disabled
13 Non-white
- Hunter College of the City University of New York (CUNY)
83 Students enrolled
24 Graduates last year
16 Disabled
23 Non-white
- State University of New York at Buffalo
25 Students enrolled
4 Graduates last year
3 Disabled
4 Non-white

CBVH continues to work with the 3 remaining institutions of higher education 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.

2. Hunter College of CUNY is the only university preparation program in New York State graduating O&M instructors and RTs. Graduates from this program are eligible for certification by the ACVREP. (Hunter has been contacted and we'll update this section once their info has been received)

A. Dual Orientation and Mobility/Rehabilitation Teacher/ Hybrid Orientation and Mobility

- 22 Students enrolled
- 22 Graduates last year
- 5 Disabled
- 12 Non-white

C. 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:

- a. Maintain relationships established with the Regional Technical Assistance and Training 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.
- b. 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.
- c. Continue to develop relationships with distance learning programs to locate curriculum that meet the learning styles and needs of CBVH staff. These include video conferencing, videotapes, and/or computer technology.
- d. Increase opportunities for staff in-service training.
- e. Maintain a training database for all CBVH staff that includes the following information:
 1. CRC status
 2. Educational history
 3. Proficiency areas (sign language, foreign language)
 4. Training priority requests
 5. Graduate course work
- f. Continue to recruit qualified VRCs, O&Ms, and RTs including those from diverse backgrounds or who have needed language skills.
- g. Continue to partner with VESID with regard to the CSPD and the long term training of employees.

D. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

1. 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 eligibility to sit for the CRCC certificate examination.
2. Plans to Retrain or Hire Staff Who Do Not Meet The Highest Requirements

Staff Hired Prior to Implementation Date

Nine staff was hired prior to the implementation of this CSPD. Their progress towards meeting the Civil Service VRC personnel standard is updated in section A.1.c. of this report. An individual plan to achieve CRC academic eligibility is developed for each staff person who requires this credential.

Staff Hired Subsequent to the Implementation Date

New York State Civil Service VRC personnel standards were approved and are reflected in this CSPD. All VRCs in VRC titles will be required to commit to academic eligibility for CRC.

E. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

1. The CBVH in-service training program provides funds for attendance at workshops, conferences, formal course work, agency developed training sessions, 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 11 Adaptive Technology Centers in the state. Upon request, the centers provide training to CBVH staff on new access technology for individuals with disabilities.
2. Training areas for staff development are determined by the following:
 - a. Annual needs assessment conducted by the Training Unit,

- b. RSA priorities, and
 - c. CBVH administration priorities.
2. CBVH maintains a library, which contains current information and research in the rehabilitation field. This information is available to all staff.

F. 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. CBVH staff with the required qualifications may be used for this purpose, or sub-contractors with specialty skills may be used.

G. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM

VRCs and their supervisors establish performance standards that become the basis for the counselor's annual performance evaluation. These performance standards include the measures needed by those who must upgrade their qualifications to meet nationally recognized standards.

H. 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 VESID, 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 VESID's Office of Program Development and Support Services (PDSS), in collaboration with other VESID organizational units. The CBVH CSPD was developed by a workgroup, which included representatives of both VESID and CBVH.

3. Attachment 4.11(a)

STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

In August 2009, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) disseminated a Vocational Rehabilitation Assessment Guide for states to use in the development

and implementation of the Statewide Needs Assessment. Entitled, “Developing a Model Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment with Corresponding Training Materials for State VR Agency Staff and SRC Members”, the guide is intended to be used by all state vocational rehabilitation agencies for completion of the Statewide Needs Assessment for the 2011 State Plan.

The Model Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment is designed to satisfy requirements in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and produce useful and timely information. The model combines existing information and new information to inform the State Plan. It addresses the following two goals:

1. What are the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly the vocational rehabilitation needs of:
 - Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment
 - Individuals with disabilities who are minorities
 - individuals with disabilities who are unserved or underserved
 - individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment
2. The need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

The model assessment defines and establishes goals, develops the plan for gathering information, gathers the information, analyzes the information, develops conclusions, develops potential action strategies and informs the state plan goals, priorities and strategies.

CBVH staff and the State Rehabilitation Council have defined and established goals. They have developed the plan for gathering information and have begun that process. Once all the data has been gathered, the staff will analyze the information and share that information with CBVH management staff and other appropriate individuals in order to develop action strategies to better serve the unserved and underserved populations in New York State.

The Statewide Needs Assessment will be completed by July 1, 2010 for submission to RSA as part of the 2011 State Plan.

4. Attachment 4.11(b)

ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED AND COSTS OF SERVICES

CBVH estimates that during Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2011, 1000 individuals will be found eligible for CBVH services. CBVH anticipates serving 4,130 individuals during FFY 2011. Of the 4,130 individuals expected to receive services, CBVH expects that 4,000 individuals will be served using Title I Vocational Rehabilitation funds at a total estimated cost of \$21,300,000. CBVH expects that the remaining 130 individuals will be served using Title VI, Part B Supported Employment funds at a total estimated cost of \$300,000.

In order to provide RSA with an estimate of the number of individuals in the State who are eligible for VR services under the Rehabilitation Act CBVH has examined data from the 2000 Census. Using an incidence of legal blindness formula, CBVH estimates that there are 54,196 legally blind non-institutionalized individuals between the ages of 22 and 64 in New York State.

There are numerous factors that impact an individual's choice to seek vocational rehabilitation services and ultimately obtain employment. There is currently no method to accurately assess how many of the estimated 54,196 legally blind individuals ages 22 through 64 would apply for CBVH services and be found eligible for services. Therefore, the best estimate of the number of individuals in the State who are eligible for VR services is based on historical data as noted above.

5. Attachment 4.11(c)(4)

GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI, PART B FUNDS

The goal of CBVH's supported employment program is to enable individuals with the most significant disabilities to achieve and maintain competitive employment in their communities. CBVH continues to serve all eligible individuals that need supported employment services with a goal of placing as many individuals as possible in employment.

In New York State, the administrative responsibility for supported employment programs is consolidated in the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID). In 1990, the former Department of Social Services (now the Office of Children and Family Services) Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH) entered into a "Memorandum of Interagency Understanding Regarding Supported Employment" with the State Education Department - VESID, the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), and the Office of Mental Health (OMH) governing current and future program administration. This document is updated annually, as needed. The administrative arrangement is established in accordance with Section 3, Chapter 515 of the Laws of New York of 1992.

Following a Request for Proposals process, VESID developed a new contract for all intensive supported employment services and for all VESID-funded extended services. With input from CBVH, funds to serve CBVH consumers were allocated to 52 providers to serve approximately 142 consumers. Because blindness is a low incidence disability, CBVH was challenged in anticipating service needs and distributing the limited funds available. CBVH hopes to work more closely with VESID in the future in determining the distribution of the limited funds available for intensive and extended services.

CBVH maintains case management, program monitoring and oversight responsibilities for the supported employment services provided to CBVH consumers. Service providers regularly provide CBVH with individual consumer reports, and CBVH staff meets regularly with providers and consumers. Information on services to CBVH consumers is also available through data provided by contractors to the New York Integrated Supported Employment Reporting System (NYISERS). CBVH will continue to work with VESID to assess performance on an ongoing basis, participate in on-site reviews, and provide technical assistance or recommend adjustments to contracts as needed.

During the past year, CBVH has worked with other members of the Chapter 515 Implementation Team to improve the delivery of supported employment services. Specifically, the team has:

- Made changes to the New York Interagency Supported Employment Reporting (NYISER) system to enable providers to electronically complete the VES-416 Supported Employment Consumer Monthly Progress Report, eliminating duplicative reporting elements for different state agencies;
- Discussed program changes within OMRDD and OMH and their impact on supported employment efforts for joint consumers;
- Held dialogues with representatives of the Empire State Association of Persons in Supported Employment, resulting in a survey, review of the resulting data and public discussions to determine how to better assess the needs of persons with the most significant disabilities; and
- Drafted revisions to the existing Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen partner agencies' commitment to the provision of supported employment services, and better planning and coordination of service delivery.

6. 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) State Goals, CBVH has revised several goals and priorities that were developed last year as part of a strategic planning process. These goals and priorities have been updated in response to the results of the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment and in response to recommendations from RSA. CBVH has worked with the SRC to develop and refine the goals and priorities.

Outreach activities have been incorporated into the strategies as appropriate. The needs assessment incorporates the recommendations of the “VR Needs Assessment Guide” prepared by InfoUse to identify the needs of:

- Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their needs for supported employment services
- Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program
- Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system

The needs assessment also includes an assessment of the need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

CBVH performance on the Standards and Indicators provides positive information about CBVH’s current policies and practices with respect to the equitable provision of services and in particular, services to individuals who are minorities.

Goal #1: Increase the number of competitive employment outcomes using Fiscal Year 2008 data on the number of competitive employment outcomes as a baseline.

Strategies

1. Using information from the needs assessment, recommendations from the SRC and other sources, develop strategies and services that will meet the employment needs of consumers and employers.
2. Continue expanding relationships with employers and business associations to encourage hiring CBVH consumers.
3. Strengthen partnership with VESID to take advantage of provider networks providing services to individuals with disabilities other than blindness.

4. Continue to establish and utilize linkages with state, local, and community non-profit organizations that provide free services to individuals interested in setting up their own business.
5. Implement and monitor the 7 contracts for innovative and creative training and placement programs.
6. Increase the amount of face-to-face time that CBVH counselors spend with consumers. CBVH will attempt to add four additional counselor positions in the downstate area, where caseload sizes are the largest. Additionally, the new computer information system is expected to reduce time spent on paperwork, while increasing counselor time spent with consumers.

Goal#2: Increase the number of individuals from ethnic and racial minority populations who receive services.

Strategies

1. Improve outreach activities to the specific populations who are unserved/underserved.
2. Increase culturally sensitive marketing and outreach activities to those populations, using strategies identified as effective in other locations.
3. Work with other OCFS divisions to collaborate on initiatives that will expand and increase CBVH's ability to work effectively with individuals from ethnic and racial minority populations.
4. Translate written materials and brochures into other languages in addition to the currently available versions in Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, and Russian.

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

Strategies

1. Increase oversight of CBVH counselor performance through supervisory review of open and closed cases. This is enhanced by the use of the new CBVH Consumer Information System (CIS).

2. Develop new and existing relationships with employers in order to increase the number of successful closures.
3. Increase CBVH counselor emphasis on initial assessment and planning in order to increase successful employment outcomes for consumers.
4. Use the findings of the recent Comprehensive Needs Assessment to identify ways to improve the services for individuals from minority backgrounds.

Goal #4: Improve services to individuals who are Deaf-Blind.

Strategies

1. Conduct a statewide needs assessment to determine the needs of individuals who are Deaf-Blind.
2. Begin design of programs and services to meet the needs as identified in the needs assessment.

Goal #5: Improve Assistive Technology Services

Strategies

1. Using feedback from the CBVH Assistive Technology workgroup, the Executive Board, the State Rehabilitation Council and participants of the Town meetings, refine the policy in the Vocational Rehabilitation Services manual section to improve the delivery of assistive technology services to CBVH consumers.
2. Update equipment at the contracted Assistive Technology Centers.
3. Provide training to CBVH and contract agency staff about the revised Assistive Technology policy.

Goal#6: Improve Service Delivery for consumers with Mental Health Issues

Strategies

1. Using feedback from the CBVH Mental Health Workgroup, the Executive Board, the State Rehabilitation Council and participants of the Town Meetings, refine the policy in the Vocational Rehabilitation Services manual section related to improve the delivery of services provided to consumers with Mental Health issues.
2. Provide training to CBVH staff about the revised policy about services to consumers with Mental Health issues.

Innovation and Expansion Funds

Innovation and expansion funds were used during 2009 to fund seven ATCs across the state. These ATCs provide technology assessment and training to CBVH consumers through contracts with CBVH. ATC staff meets with CBVH at least twice a year to share best practice information, learn about new equipment and to address issues that arise during the year. As requested, ATC staffs provide training and demonstrations of new equipment to CBVH district office counselors. Available innovation and expansion funds will continue to be used to fund the ATCs at a comparable level in the next fiscal year.

7. Attachment 4.11(c)(1)

EVALUATION AND REPORT OF PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING IDENTIFIED GOALS AND PRIORITIES AND USE OF TITLE I FUNDS FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION

CBVH evaluates progress toward achievement of goals and priorities on an ongoing basis. Progress achieved during the past year is reported as activities completed to address the strategies associated with each goal. Many of the strategies listed to achieve the objectives are ongoing activities. Where appropriate, objectives that have been met are noted. CBVH is reporting on the goals and objectives identified in the 2010 VR State Plan. As noted in Attachment 4.11 (c)(1), two of the goals and priorities have been revised.

Goal #1:

Examine exiting quality assurance processes to identify gaps and determine improvements needed to expand and enhance quality assurance activities.

This goal has been met.

Strategies:

1. Six contract agencies were reviewed during this fiscal year, including the Helen Keller National Center. Currently, the quality assurance process includes an on-site review process to determine the extent to which contract agencies are meeting the standards for specific contract services. Upon completion of the review, data is analyzed and a narrative report is forwarded to the agency reviewed. The report highlights the strengths and weaknesses of services provided by the agency and will include corrective action plans to address any areas that the contractor is falling short in meeting the standards of the contract. These six agencies were the first agencies to receive report cards. The report card system allows CBVH and other stakeholders to compare the services offered by contract agencies across the state. The report card is included in the narrative report, providing a synopsis of the data obtained from the review process and is made available for review by stakeholders via the CBVH website.
2. CBVH implemented a new case management system on October 4, 2008. All CBVH staff received training on the new system. CIS allows supervisory staff to monitor and review consumer cases more easily than when cases were in paper format.
3. CBVH contracted with the Center for Essential Management Services to conduct a consumer satisfaction survey for all consumers closed in status 26, 28 and 30 in FY 2008. The results of that survey indicated that consumers were very satisfied with the services received by CBVH staff. Over 90% of those consumers interviewed gave credit to CBVH for helping them learn new skills, gain confidence and improve access to various supports that enabled them to improve their employability. The results indicated that employment outcomes might increase if all consumers possess independent travel skills and if all consumers were encouraged to participate in job placement services.

CBVH also contracted with the Center for Essential Management Services to conduct a consumer satisfaction survey for Independent Living Services. Results of that survey indicated the consumers were generally quite satisfied with the Independent Living Services received from CBVH.

Respondents felt that CBVH staff is knowledgeable and dependable. Most respondents also felt that they received the necessary services and that these services empowered them and benefited their lives.

4. CBVH will continue these strategies to maintain a quality insurance program that monitors service delivery to consumers.

Goal #2:

Increase the number of competitive employment outcomes using Fiscal Year 2008 data on the number of competitive employment outcomes as a baseline.

1. A direct result of the nationwide economic crisis, employment outcomes declined during this fiscal year. CBVH placed 335 individuals in competitive employment. This was a decrease of 16.5% over Fiscal Year 2008, when 401 individuals were placed in competitive employment. The average wage for FY2009 was \$27,499. This was an increase of 8.43% over FY2008, when the average wage was \$25,179.
2. CBVH continues to expand relationships with employers and business associations. One home office staff member is active with "The NET" – the National Employment Network.
3. CBVH issued twelve contracts for vocational evaluation services. CBVH expects to obtain better assessment information including assessments in real work settings which will enable counselors to better assist consumers in selecting goals which match their skills, interests and abilities.
4. CBVH developed a separate contact for job placement services which expanded the availability of placement services across the state by adding 36 new providers.
5. CBVH is using ARRA funds to increase competitive employment closures. Projects include:
 - Establishing a mobile technology training unit through the Suffolk Independent Living Organization to serve consumers in Suffolk County
 - Purchasing new assistive technology for the six CBVH Adaptive Technology Centers
 - Establishing an equipment reserve which will allow speedy delivery of equipment on loan while a consumer's equipment is being repaired or replaced
 - Developing an outreach and education plan to improve outreach to consumers throughout the state

- Establishing a Medical Skills Training program for individuals who are legally blind.
- Providing training on a variety of topics to CBVH staff
- Providing assistive technology at a call center at the Bronx VA which allowed access to jobs by individuals who are blind
- Awarding seven contracts to provide innovative approaches to training and job placement. Contracts include training and employment for:
 1. Scopists (reading and editing transcripts for court reporters)
 2. Customer service
 3. Information and referral and E-Commerce
 4. Entry level food service
 5. Direct support assistants in OMRDD certified day and residential settings
 6. Customer service in the travel-related industry
 7. Customer contact for medical, communication, financial, transportation and environmental sectors and
 8. Music, entertainment and media-based industries.

Goal #3:

Increase the number of individuals from ethnic and racial minority populations who receive services, beginning with a baseline of data from FY2008.

1. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment completed in 2009 identified surveyed consumers who cases were closed in status 26, 28 and 30 in fiscal year 2008. The purpose of the survey was to determine why status 26 consumers were able to obtain employment and status 28 and status 30 consumers were not. It was hoped that the results of the survey would assist CBVH in developing new policies or new services that would result in more individuals obtaining employment. However, the results of the surveys indicated that consumers who achieved successful outcomes reported similar service experiences to those consumers who were not successful. The only differences noted were that successful consumers were more able to manage transportation independently and were able to complete a program for placement services. Orientation and Mobility Services and Placement Services are available to all vocational rehabilitation consumers. CBVH counselors will focus efforts on trying to get all consumers to complete O&M and placement services.
2. In an effort to increase culturally sensitive marketing and outreach activities to ethnic and racial minority populations, CBVH is working closely with the Independent Living Program in Harlem to develop outreach activities focusing on the needs of ethnic and racial minority populations. In addition, CBVH expects to begin working with a professional marketing company to develop a marketing and outreach plan.

3. CBVH is participating in an agency-wide initiative known as the Disproportionate Minority Representation/Race Equity and Cultural Competence Committee. In the spring 2010, training will be provided to each CBVH employee, with the focus on identifying and eliminating racial and ethnic inequities in agency service delivery systems, practices and policies. Contractor agency staff will also be included in this training program. CBVH home office and field office staff have conducted outreach programs across the state, focusing on schools, colleges, churches, community center, health fairs, ethnic festivals and senior centers. These efforts are on-going.
4. CBVH participates in an agency-wide effort to identify those consumers who are not proficient in using the English language. This agency-wide effort will assist CBVH in determining other languages in which materials need to be made available. Currently, CBVH provides its written materials in Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian. In addition, CBVH has access to "Language Line", a telephone translation service that provides interpreters for consumers who are non-English speaking.

Goal #4:

Pass the RSA Standards and Indicators

1. Preliminary results of FFY 2009 data indicate that CBVH has once again passed the RSA Standards and Indicators.
2. New Senior Counselor Review Forms and the implementation of the computer management system has increased the oversight of CBVH counselor performance. It is expected that this increased supervision will result in counselors developing and/or enhancing the skills need to develop relationships with new employers.
3. With the implementation of CIS, the counseling staff should have more time to s focus on assessment and planning which will increase the number of competitive closures.

Goal #5:

Purchase and Implement a new case management system.

This goal has been met.

1. CBVH staff and contract agency staff have been working with the new case management system since October, 2008. At this time, the system

has been customized to perform most tasks necessary for CBVH. Additional customization will take place as needed.

2. New CBVH and contract agency staff will receive training on the case management system as needed.

Progress In Achieving Supported Employment Goals

The current supported employment delivery system has allowed all eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities who are interested in supported employment to obtain services.

Goal #1: The goal of CBVH's supported employment program is to enable individuals with the most significant disabilities to achieve and maintain competitive employment in their communities.

Goal #2 Under the current contract, a total of 52 providers have the capacity to serve a total of 144 individuals who are legally blind, with a goal to place, train and stabilize 105 individuals who are legally blind.

In 2009, 132 individuals received supported employment services. Twenty-four of these individuals obtained and have maintained integrated employment in the community.

Standards and Indicators

During FFY 2009, preliminary reports indicate that CBVH passed the Standards and Indicators for the fourth year in a row, meeting the required performance levels for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Standards, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6 and 2.1.

Innovation and Expansion Funds

Innovation and expansion funds were used during 2009 to fund six Adaptive Technology Centers (ATCs) across the State. These ATCs provide technology assessment and training to CBVH consumers through contracts with CBVH. ATC staff meets with CBVH at least twice a year to share best practice information, learn about new equipment and to address issues that arise during the year. As requested, ATC staffs provide training and demonstrations of new equipment to CBVH counselors. Available innovation and expansion funds will continue to be used to fund the ATCs at a comparable level in the next fiscal year.

8. Attachment 6.3

QUALITY, SCOPE AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) continues to have primary responsibility for supported employment programs and other integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in New York State. A memorandum of understanding is in place covering the respective roles and responsibilities of CBVH, VESID, the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) and the Office of Mental Health (OMH) in supported employment for consumers who are blind.

Since 1989, the number of community agencies utilizing Supported Employment Grant Funds under Title VI-B of the Rehabilitation Act to provide supported employment services to individuals who are blind has expanded from eight to 52. The grant awards stipulate adherence to all requirements set forth in Title VI-B of the Rehabilitation Act. Targeted populations include individuals with multiple disabilities who are aging out of educational programs, individuals in day treatment and long term extended employment and those who have been unable to maintain employment in integrated community settings. The "individual placement" is the prevailing model; however, this does not preclude consideration of alternatives including the "enclave" and "affirmative business". The 52 agencies are located in major cities and in suburban and rural areas across the State.

Supported employment services are delivered through the VESID contracting system, as agreed under Section 3, Chapter 515 of the Laws of New York of 1992. CBVH transfers its supported employment funds to VESID, but retains case management responsibility for individuals in the intensive service phase. Under the contract, individual agencies have agreed to serve individuals who are blind; however, limited funding and the low incidence of blindness make it difficult to accurately anticipate where supported employment funds should be allocated. This creates challenges when an individual needs services in an area not covered by a contract, or in which capacity for serving individuals who are blind has already been met. Under the Memorandum of Interagency Understanding Regarding Supported Employment, OMH and OMRDD provide extended follow-along services for individuals who meet their respective eligibility criteria. Individuals who do not meet their criteria may receive extended services through designated VESID funds or through natural supports in the work place. Individuals in extended services may request Post Employment Services or, if necessary, ask to have their cases reopened.

Traditional vocational rehabilitation services continue to be available to supported employment candidates using Vocational Rehabilitation funds in the development

as well as the execution of Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). In this regard there is no distinction from other vocational rehabilitation consumers.

Quality assurance is a matter of ongoing concern. Providers receive Guidelines for Supported Employment which are updated as needed and convey the expectations for quality services. VESID quality assurance staff, with input from CBVH and other partners, established new case review form protocols to gather information that can be used to monitor and improve services. CBVH district office staffs are invited to participate in reviews of agencies in their catchment area; however, they typically participate only in reviews of agencies that are serving consumers who are blind.

The CBVH supported employment coordinator and staff regularly monitor reports and contract implementation. The coordinator regularly talks with CBVH district office, staff, contractors and state monitors to address progress and opportunities for program improvement, providing technical assistance and training as needed.

9. Attachment 4.8 (b)(1)

Cooperation, Collaboration and Coordination

Cooperative Agreements with Other Components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System

Many of the individuals served by the CBVH have service needs within the parameters of other New York State agencies. For that reason it is important to plan and coordinate services. CBVH has established the following cooperative agreements in order to help consumers achieve better outcomes.

- Memorandum of Agreement to Provide Services of Individuals Who Are Deafblind between the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH)
- Memorandum of Understanding regarding Supported Employment among VESID, CBVH, Office of Mental Health (OMH) and Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD)
- Joint Agreement between the Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped and Public Institutions of Higher Education (SUNY, CUNY)
- Memorandum of Agreement among the NY Department of Labor, VESID and CBVH for administration, implementation and promotion of the Work

Opportunities Tax Credit program and the NYS Workers with Disabilities Employment Tax Credit.

In an effort to improve services to individuals with severe mental illness, CBVH began a dialogue with OMH administration to identify the most effective means to coordinate services. As OMH services are delivered through a vast array of MH of the agencies, it was agreed to focus efforts regionally, aiming to increase understanding disabilities served by each agency, and identifying strategies for effective joint service delivery.

CBVH has also initiated efforts to increase CBVH consumer utilization of services from One-Stop Centers through dialogues with staff from the Department of Labor and teleconferences with Disability Program Navigators (DPN).

COOPERATION AND COORDINATION WITH AGENCIES THAT ARE NOT IN THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEM AND WITH OTHER ENTITIES

In addition to collaborating with State Workforce partners, CBVH works with a number of community and national partners. Specific collaborations around employment include:

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)

CSAVR's National Employment Team (NET) provides a coordinated approach to serving business customers through employer development, business consulting and corporate relations. By establishing partnerships with businesses, VR can better match employer staffing needs with the skills and interests of consumers seeking employment, as well as help business to retain employees who experience disability. The NET provides:

- Businesses with direct access to qualified applicants and support services from the public VR system,
- VR consumers with access to national employment opportunities and career development resources, and
- VR agencies with a national system for sharing employment resources, best practices and business connections.

A designated point of contact serves as the primary contact for employers seeking to partner with each CBVH. In the past year, through the NET partnership, CBVH has shared information about Schedule A hiring practices and a number of federal positions including those with the Internal Revenue Service, Social Security, Office General Accounting, US DOT Federal Highway Administration, DOL Office of Safety and Health Administration, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In addition, the NET shared information

on a number of internship and skill camp opportunities for high school and college students. Through discussion boards, CBVH has participated in conversations about home-based employment resources, effectiveness of different providers, testing accommodations, VR policies, Ticket to Work and other issues.

Working with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP)

CBVH is interested in improving the capacity of community rehabilitation partners to successfully place consumers who are legally blind. CBVH, the Region II Technical Assistance and Continuing Education program, and CRP jointly plan training to address information and skill needs of both CBVH and CRP staff. The 2009 Vision Rehabilitation and Employment Institute provided workshops on ethics, innovative transition projects, negotiating the current economic situation, SSA Plan for Achieving Self Support, career search strategies, providing culturally competent services, the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council and employer partnerships in placement.

The Metropolitan Placement Consortium has been meeting regularly and expanded to include new providers through the 2009 Placement contract. The Consortium worked with Baruch College Computer Center for Visually Impaired Persons to present “Changing Vision, Changing Lives.” The conference’s key-note “Dare to Succeed” set the tone for participants, including consumers, rehabilitation professionals and providers. Presentations of success stories in both the profit and non-profit sectors identified how obstacles were identified and overcome to achieve successful employment outcomes. Other sessions looked at policy and practice of One-Stops, technology trends, career transitions and networking, and disability advocacy. During the conference a number of employers were presented with “Breaking Barriers” awards for their efforts to provide opportunities for work experience and jobs. The Consortium also provided CBVH with input on ways to use Federal stimulus funds, discussed mechanisms to share job leads, explored possibilities for conducting mock interviews, discussed aspects of the new Placement Contract, and held discussions on timely topics affecting placement efforts.

Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team

The Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team composed of mid-level managers from CBVH, VESID, OMRDD and OMH continue to meet to discuss ongoing concerns with implementation of supported employment intensive and extended services in New York State. In order to better understand how providers plan to meet the service needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, the team contracted to conduct a survey which examined the information obtained and reviewed at the time of referral for supported employment services. The results were shared and discussed with providers at a statewide conference and feedback will be incorporated in further planning

efforts. The primary focus of the team is revising the Supported Employment Memorandum of Understanding toward more effective planning and coordination of intensive and extended services.

Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC)

OCFS CBVH is among over 50 members of the MISCC, and participates on both the employment and transportation committees of the MISCC. The MISCC Employment Committee has made recommendations to the MISCC in the areas of: increasing the use of work incentives, making employers aware of the talent pool among workers with disabilities, allocating resources toward more integrated employment, increasing access to employment services through streamlined and simplified eligibility, and increasing employment in the public sector (particularly the NYS 55-b program). The MISCC Employment Committee serves as the steering committee to the state Medicaid Infrastructure Grant.

Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG)

New York's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant funds the "New York Makes Work Pay" initiative which has taken a multi-pronged approach to improving employment outcomes. CBVH staff, providers and employers have participated in many of the initiatives under this program including:

- Pilots of the Discovery Process as a means to gain a greater understanding of a consumers' strengths, interests and abilities and the supports available to enable them to achieve employment through a customized approach;
- Collaboration to expand entrepreneurial employment opportunities
- Workshops to increase employers capacity and knowledge regarding hiring individuals with disabilities; and
- Benefits Advisement and Asset Development training.

Meeting the Needs of Special Populations

CBVH's Rural Employment Group continues to meet by teleconference to discuss issues unique to rural areas. As a vehicle for problem solving, it has helped counselors find new approaches and share solutions that have worked.

Another group focusing on the needs of individuals with severe mental illness provided recommendations to improve partnerships with mental health agencies and revise policy to facilitate more successful employment outcomes

Cooperation with Industries for the Blind of New York State

CBVH continues its partnership with Industries for the Blind of New York State (IBNYS) to facilitate growth in competitive employment options. IBNYS' Strategic

Plan states that its leadership will focus 50% of its time on opportunity development, including areas of employment in service and technology. While supporting new initiatives, IBNYS will also maintain its manufacturing components, looking for new products and customers.

CBVH has encouraged IBNYS affiliates to provide needed work experience and skill training to enable individuals who are interested to move on to competitive employment in an integrated setting.

Cooperative Agreement with Recipients of Grants for Services to American Indians

In 2003, CBVH established an interagency agreement with the Seneca Nation of Indians Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The agreement represents both parties' commitment to mutual cooperation, coordination and collaboration to increase vocational opportunities for members of the Seneca Nation of Indians with legal blindness. It establishes shared values, outlines how services will be coordinated and how members of both organizations will participate in cross-training activities.

The collaborative relationship between the CBVH Buffalo District Office and the Seneca Nation of Indians Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program has increased awareness, acceptance and utilization of CBVH services. CBVH maintains a relationship in which referrals are handled in a timely and culturally sensitive manner. CBVH staff conducts in-service training with agencies on the Cattaraugus Reservation, and working closely with staff of the Salamanca satellite of the Section 121 program and with the Area Office for the Aging on the reservation. CBVH staff serves on the Section 121 Project's Advisory Board, which meets monthly. CBVH further supports the activities of the section 121 Tribal VR Program through the delivery of state-funded services to children and elderly individuals, allowing them to better focus resources on tribal members seeking employment.

10. Attachment 4.11(c)(1)

STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Goals and Priorities

CBVH has revised two of the goals and priorities that were developed for the 2011 State Plan. These goals and priorities have been updated and revised in response to the results of the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment and in response to recommendations from RSA. The SRC has provided input into these goals and priorities.

Proposed Goals:

- Goal #1:** *Increase the number of competitive employment outcomes using Fiscal Year 2008 data on the number of competitive employment outcomes as a baseline.*
- Goal #2:** *Increase the number of individuals from ethnic and racial minority populations who receive services, beginning with a baseline of data for Fiscal Year 2008.*
- Goal#3:** *Continue to pass the RSA Standards and Indicators.*
- Goal#4** *Explore improving services to individuals who are Deaf-Blind.*
- Goal#5** *Explore improving Assistive Technology Services.*
- Goal#6** *Explore improving delivery of Mental Health Services.*