

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements

VI. Program-Specific Requirements for Core State Plan Programs

Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Federal Fiscal Year 2017

(a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council.

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer controlled commissions, must describe the following:

- (1) input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council's functions;
- (2) the Designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and
- (3) the designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations.

Report of the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Introduction:

The SRC has had a very productive year. Again the past year has seen excellent collaboration between all services for the blind and visually impaired. Three highlights that stand out are the Town Hall Meetings, development of the Employment Guide, and a new cafeteria for the Randolph Shepherd Program.

- The SRC Council felt that the Town Hall Meeting results were very important as it brought us closer to the consumers and their needs.
- The Randolph Shepherd Program has resulted in helping to expand job opportunities for Vermont's blind and visually impaired.
- The Employment Guide, designed by the DBVI staff and Council to explain the DBVI "products" offered to consumers was completed.

Election of officers:

Chair: Robert Lanoue

Vice-chair: Harriet Hall,

Executive Committee Members- at-Large: Donna Stratton and Patty Shane.

Committee assignments:

Membership: Tom Frank

Outreach: Peggy Howard

Policies and Procedures: Kerry White

Committee activities:

Membership: Pam Schirner has been approved for membership.

Outreach: Represented the blind and visually impaired on Vermont Disability Day and participated throughout the state on White Cane Awareness Day. The Employment Guide to explain the products of DBVI was completed and is now being used throughout the state.

Policy and Procedure: The policy and procedure document has been reviewed and small changes have been made. It has been approved by the Council.

Reports:

VABVI:

- Children's Services is working with students to implement on-line testing.

- Met with DBVI Counselors to collaborate on transitional services and eligibility.
- Held a successful Tech Fair with many excellent vendors.
- Announced that “White Cane Awareness” Day was successful throughout the state.

VT Special Services Library:

- Started recordings for talking books with local volunteers.
- Demonstration on downloading availability by using a new cartridge cable.
- Working with the VABVI to start book clubs throughout the state with 12-14 members per club.
- A new currency reader is available to Vermont consumers through the library
- Theresa Faust has accepted another position in Ocala Florida and Jennifer Hart will be joining the council to represent the library.

DBVI:

- Openings were announced and filled for two positions in DBVI. Jean Palmer was hired as Counselor and Taya Tarr was hired as a Rehabilitation Associate in Burlington.
- The council reviewed questions on the annual needs assessment survey.
- The updated three-year plan was shared with the Council.
- The Council was informed of the 2015 Rehabilitation Administrative Services review of the state plan.
- Four regional town hall meetings and the results of a closure and a customer satisfaction survey were reviewed by the Council. Goals and strategies of the three year plan are being revised based on these results. The updated three-year plan is shared with the Council.
- A meeting was held with the Agency of Education to discuss transition of students with disabilities with implementation of independent living skills being introduced into the curriculum to be included in the IEP.
- A second café, sponsored by the Randolph Shepherd Program will be opening at the Court House in Burlington.
- An all-day staff-SRC workshop was held based on Steven Covey’s “Seven Habits of Highly Successful People” and was run by Jennifer Cohen.
- The Perkins School for the Blind presented a program on software accessibility and user-friendly data bases to VABVI and DBVI staff.
- The DBVI staff will have a workshop and discussion on various eye conditions by Darick Wright from the Perkins School for the Blind.

It was announced that 15% of the DBVI budget is going toward student transition or independent living.

SRC Chair:

- Attended an AHS meeting on housing.
- Arranged for the Vermont Council for the Blind to use the DBVI web site for announcements.
- Served on the interview committee for hiring the new DBVI Counselor and a Rehabilitation Associate.
- Attended an informational session and later the launch of a new curriculum called “INCLUDE”.
for all students to learn about disabilities.
- Attended all four town meetings throughout the state.

Working together:

The SRC and DBVI staff participated in a one-day training to learn about the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People authored by Stephen Covey. This training was designed to help the SRC and staff learn important habits

that will be used during the year as we work together to evaluate performance data and update goals, strategies, and actions. The workshop teaches some specific techniques for evaluating information, planning, and carrying out a plan. It also contains specific tools for working together to discuss issues by including a variety of perspectives to create solutions that are collaborative.

Submitted by Robert Lanoue, Chairperson, Vermont SRC

Input from SRC at the End of Year Combined Meeting with DBVI Staff (June 25, 2015):

The SRC worked closely with DBVI in many areas this year. They include: Hiring new staff; Policies and Procedures; Planning; Evaluating Town Meeting results, Closure Survey results; Customer Satisfaction results, Outreach; White Cane Events; and Consumer Driven Events.

The following is an exchange of updates including input from DBVI staff and the SRC. DBVI staff will present and will look to the SRC for their viewpoints. The focus will be on our products and whether consumers are better off as a result of receiving our services. And whether or not they feel that our services were delivered well (timely, accurate and useful)?

Strategy 1: DBVI will collaborate with Creative Workforce Solutions to find employment in accordance with the customer's interests and qualifications. (Nancy Lacroix/Amanda Barrett)

The first and most valuable strategy we have is progressive employment.

This is where the employer can try the client out at no cost to them for up to 240 hours of service. This allows the employer to see if the client can do the job and if they are a good fit for the position.

We help our clients with resume building and cover letters.

We do practice interviewing and where to look for jobs. We also provide our consumers with job leads.

We approach employers, in person and in writing, with our progressive employment initiative to give employers the incentive to try our clients. We also educate the employer with ways our clients can do the job through technology.

We give our clients ideas on the types of jobs they can do with the skills they have. We talk about training options and the advantage of going to college.

We provide a client centered approach to seeking employment where our clients can grow and learn about themselves while developing their career goal.

VABIR? That question gets asked in the general public outside of the DBVI network and by consumers alike. The informational literature that is handed out describes VABIR as a non-profit helping individuals achieve employment goals.

Nancy touched upon progressive employment and the various forms this make take as a means for consumers to secure employment. To go more in-depth describing the steps both small and large that are taken to achieve employment.

Some consumers' access VABIR services to receive assistance with updating a resume, refresh interview skills, and generally speaking obtain employment in a stream line efficient manner. The consumer's skill set and work

experience often determine the pace. **A few case examples that demonstrate how small milestones are the pyramid for success:**

A career RN nurse with 25 + years of experience lost vision suddenly. As the primary breadwinner for her family her identity and self-worth were directly tied to her career. This consumer is still in the process of adjusting to her blindness. Small milestones have been for her to go to The Carroll Center for the Blind, access training with JAWS, build confidence with typing, become facile with adaptive technology, building a resume, and attending a health career fair. At the career fair an employer discussed the possibility of job carving a position once the consumer gains a level of confidence with JAWS and technology. Consumers making an effort to network has proven to be successful.

A consumer with no work experience and limited soft skills is looking for part time work opportunities. A resume that focuses on education, technology skills, and skills gained as a homemaker process is slow yet organized and focused. Building, attending DOL workshops on interviewing and completion of mock interviews, clothes shopping for proper interview attire, discussions on proper workplace etiquette, then on to progressive employment: job shadows which will lead to work experiences with the end goal of a hire.

As demonstrated the path to success is set at the consumers pace determined by skill sets while encouraging positive change to guide the consumer towards progressive employment. Often the “climb up the mountain” is not straight forward. The goal may be employment but employment is typically the means to reach the much larger personal goal of being better off in life whether it be moving out of subsidized housing, take annual vacations, or to have a healthy sense of accomplishment and success.

SRC Suggestions:

Steve Pouliot: The Hadley School for the Blind has some online resources for typing classes.

Pam Schirner: What we could do to enhance the experiences of folks who are young and/or unmotivated is have more time. Pam had one consumer who worked for 40 hours/week at the café over the course of a year. Now this consumer works at Costco (for three years now) and rides his bike to work. He is a success and he will work the rest of his life. Pam struggles with the fact that we don't always get enough time. There is one 20 year old working at the courthouse, who has been there for almost a year and he has changed entirely. His level of confidence is so much higher. We need another level of work experience that lasts a year.

Fred: There is a 240 hours rule for work experiences. The Department of Labor enforces this: it is supposed to be a pro-employee law.

*There may be some wiggle room if this is considered a long-term training or something along that line to lengthen the work experience feel. We could develop within DBVI a training center with Pam (through the Randolph-Sheppard program). Our consumers learn so much about themselves, etc.

Strategy 2: DBVI will promote employment by educating employers and providing opportunities for increased exposure to people who are blind or visually impaired. This will address “Societies reaction to blindness.” (Melissa Hoellerich)

DBVI has promoted employment by educating employers at various events throughout the year. Examples as follow: Employer Recognition Breakfast; Employer Awards at recognition breakfast; Employers nominated and awarded to the Governor's Council (GCEPD); White Cane Day panel discussions on public access tv; videos

showcasing employers and employees (DBVI clients) on DBVI website; DBVI staff at local chamber of commerce business shows, chamber mixers, and job fairs.

Our goal is normalizing the experience of blind individuals working in a variety of jobs. Exposing employers to the technology (CCTV's Braille, JAWS), white cane, and other worksite accommodations.

Clients are better off because they are empowered, confident, and have vocational hopes, dreams, and goals. Clients see others being successful on the job and in the community. Employers are better off because they have a diversified work force with capable, committed, and reliable employees.

SRC Suggestions:

Make a video of Heidi Viens working at the Courthouse Café.

Every office has an iPad with videos of our consumers and brings these to meetings, job fairs, etc.

Tom: Uses Jaws, Magic, touch-typing—has a sign next to his desk that says, “If I have a far away dumb look on my face, it is just because I’m listening to my computer in my left ear.”

Bob: Community TV (having something made up in advance and sending it to each and every community tv, once a month for educational purposes).

Bob has been seeing his eye doctor for eight years and they just mentioned VABVI to him this year.

Peggy: We should have one meeting dedicated to figuring out who can reach out to who (optometrists, ophthalmologists, doctors). We could create a brochure targeted at doctors, specifically.

Rebecca: Primary Care Doctors maybe should be the target.

October is disability awareness month—reach out to business journals & pitch consumer success stories. It is also DBVI's month in the Agency of Human Services (AHS) newsletter.

Strategy 3: DBVI will create Consumer Driven Events to assist individuals as they prepare for employment. (Peggy Howard)

What we know: People in Vermont who have vision loss often experience isolation. Individuals are empowered when DBVI provides opportunities for people with vision impairment to meet and share experiences. A natural positive energy is experienced by participants when they participate in consumer driven events. An opportunity to hear the voice of the consumer decreases ambiguity and increases communication. Hope is enhanced through discussion on planning for the future and becoming involved in the process.

Great Expectation: voices and choices for the future. DBVI will continue to support 2 groups per year for our consumers who are transitioning from high school, attend college, are participating in job training, and working toward vocational goals. Overview, challenges and suggestions from SRC.

Employment support group (to be developed) Overview, challenges, suggestions from SRC.

Other: Consumer driven events. Input and suggestions from SRC.

SRC Suggestions:

There is always the challenge of people volunteering for something and then having nothing actually happen.

Taya: provide more support to the different groups.

Melissa: the local apple store does trainings.

Jean: There are non-profits that run groups all the time.

Finding an employer where social media and outreach are part of the job.

Talk to some of these companies, what kinds of skills are they looking for.

The challenge is DBVI can't be involved in the social media directly.

Key: What's the next step to sustain the motivation developed at Great Expectations?

Strategy 4: DBVI will create opportunities for access to information. (Mike Goldberg)

DAIL is updating all of the websites in the department including the DBVI web site. The goal is to have the information presented in a user friendly and accessible manner with easy access to other DAIL websites. Keeping the information updated and of interest to a variety of users including consumers, families, employers, providers and information seekers. Create potential opportunities for individuals to connect and interact by including available links on the web site. Highlight consumer success stories. Keep information up to date and relevant. Information on events and recreational opportunities will remain a priority. Simple effective navigation and increased use by various customers is the goal.

SRC Suggestions:

The website is on our brochures, business cards.

Mike: We could send out a mass mailing/emailing to all consumers about our new website.

Strategy 5: DBVI will address transportation challenges. (Rebecca Bezanson)

I am currently appointed to the SILC and represent DBVI. A part of my SILC responsibilities is participating on their Transportation Committee. Currently the SILC is in collaboration with the Vermont Agency of Transportation to assess the transportation needs of Vermonters with physical conditions that limit their mobility. We hope to expand this collaboration to include other disabilities that limit mobility and transportation options in the future- like sensory disabilities, such as blindness.

We also collected stories from consumers and service providers about how rules can be barriers or unreasonable hurdles to accessing transportation- such a notice minimums and rules about vehicles in the household. The SILC is working on ideas about how to hold transportation programs accountable for informing customers about choices, rights and responsibilities.

The SILC has also been in dialogue with other states about their successes with transportation in hopes of getting ideas about options that could be successfully implemented in Vermont

In addition, we are learning how to develop Personal Transportation Plans and how to show others how to develop and use their own Personal Transportation Plans.

2) People are better off because of this strategy because of increased attention and momentum regarding transportation. Questions have been answered and clarification provided which allows for better understanding

and access to transportation. We hope that these efforts will have many more benefits in the future with increased positive impact.

3) The commitment to this strategy is strong and ongoing. Transportation is a complex topic and a huge barrier for most of our consumers and critical for most in regard to employment, independence and quality of life.

4) Challenges- funding, rural state circumstances, various individual needs, multiple programs, varying rules, regional systems

SRC Suggestions:

Tom: Do counselors talk to consumers about transportation a lot?

Mike: The conversation starts early—friends and family, who they might be able to carpool with, etc. or more concrete plans if a specific job has been identified.

Harriet: Now a RCT driver can take you to Barton to catch the bus to go to Walmart. SILC is also working hard to get a bus from White River to Newport. Working with AARP.

VABIR BAM's are working on a grant to obtain transportation for consumers in the Burlington area.

Steve: SSTA has all their drivers paid hourly along with their mileage, which makes it hard for VABVI to find volunteer drivers. Planning on getting Vicki Vest on the radio shows discussing VABVI's need for volunteer drivers.

Strategy 6: DBVI will improve communication with customers regarding expectations for DBVI services. (Fred Jones)

Fred discussed the importance of creating new products like the employment services guide. Fred will be meeting with staff to determine the next customer-centered culture products for the year.

Strategy 8: DBVI will increase capacity to serve underserved populations through the implementation of special projects. (Jean Palmer)

Underserved consumers include:

Refugees and non-english-speakers – a growing population in VT and the Burlington area. We know that the two main organizations that work with these consumers (VT Refugee Resettlement and Association of Africans Living in VT) know about DBVI, because we have received referrals recently. Many other cultures do not value “independence” the way Americans do, so find it horrifying that a BVI person would learn IL skills or employment skills. Especially if it is an elder, the expectation is that they will be cared for by their families. DBVI works to respect these cultural beliefs, while also holding out the option of learning some more skills for independence.

Transition Youth – DBVI has long had regular communication with VABVI Children's Services so that all 16 year olds who are on TVI caseloads are identified to the DBVI counselor in their region. Sometimes this referral process has not gone perfectly, but on the whole, in-school youth are being referred to counselors before they graduate. New WIOA requirement to spend 15% of our funds on high school youth (or lose it) has made it more of a priority for both DBVI and general Voc Rehab counselors to actively work with these youth.

DeafBlind consumers – Can get this label without being totally deaf and blind. Some deafblind use ASL, some don't. Totally deaf and blind is a very low incidence disability in VT but very high need. A Support Service Provider (SSP) interprets the world so consumers can be integrated into work and community life, by using tactile ASL and other methods to communicate the environment. There are not enough SSPs in VT, because there are few funding mechanisms, so consumers are left isolated in their homes way too much. Fred says that Pennsylvania pays for SSP hours through Medicaid. VT should research this.

Blind consumers are not required to get developmental services.

Strategy 9: DBVI will continue to become an administratively efficient organization by finding efficient and user friendly ways to complete paperwork for staff and customers. (Mike Goldberg)

DBVI is partnering with the General Vocational Rehabilitation agency to purchase and modify an automated case management system to perform all of the documentation, reporting, financial and data requirements of the vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs. This will allow counselors and case managers to complete their paperwork and case management responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner leading to more time available for direct communication with consumers. It is planned that this "Aware" system will be available for use in February of 2017. It is presently used in over 30 state agencies across the country, is fully accessible and is widely considered the best system of its kind available.

Strategy 10: DBVI will systematically recognize exemplary staff performance using an evaluation system based on core competencies and development of SMART goals. (Fred Jones)

Fred discussed the use of creating SMART goals with staff. Each staff will have personal goals that align with division goals.

Strategy 11: DBVI will explore outreach strategies to increase applicants and diversify the DBVI caseload. (Paul Putnam/Taya Tarr/Rebecca Bezanson)

Burlington Region:

I attended the UVM Job Fair with Ira Chomsky and Nancy Lacroix to demonstrate adaptive technology that could be used at a job site. Spoke at The Lions Club about our services and what we can provide.

Rest of 2015: Connect with optometrists and ophthalmologists in the Burlington Region and provide them with brochures and business cards.

Primary Care refer to DBVI.

1) Springfield's outreach strategy is to get as many people as possible to understand what we do and generate referrals. We are available to agencies/ groups that request us to speak and present. Annually we collaborate with Vermont Adaptive on a summer event and with VABVI on a White Cane Awareness event. On a regular basis we make connections and refresh relationships with Senior Solutions, doctors, schools, community health teams, VABVI, employers, vendors, Creative Workforce Solutions, etc. We share out brochure and direct people to check out our website which Mike is the content manager of and keeps updated. We try hard and have at least an annual discussion about new ways to connect with people and get the word out and also try to figure out ways to connect with new or underserved populations.

2) People are better off because more people are familiar with us, so they are more likely to make referrals, which gives us the opportunity to serve people in need.

3) Our commitment to this strategy is strong and intact. Without outreach, often times people go without knowledge and choices related to needed services. Our goal is to assist all people in Vermont that are blind or visually impaired in accessing the services that they need.

4) Challenges- Time, busy staff, not knowing what we don't know.

Carol proposed the idea of creating a monthly newsletter for providers and making presentations to appropriate providers and services groups in the region. Senior communities with independent living might need services and we could do some outreach at these events.

Whether someone refers to VABVI or DBVI doesn't really matter, we will refer to each other as needed.

Jennifer Hart: two full-time staff at the Special Services Library. At the Disability Awareness Day, the library shared a table with DBVI/VABVI. Jennifer would love to be included if there are events DBVI/VABVI is attending.

Strategy 12: DBVI staff will have the tools to deliver services quickly to DBVI customers. (Fred Jones/Peggy Howard)

DBVI staff will have tools to deliver services quickly to DBVI customers.

DBVI's goal is to ensure we have qualified personnel to provide a high standard and expertise for working with people who have a visual impairment. The State plan outlines a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development as mandated by RSA. DBVI meets regularly with Alicia Wein the vocational Rehabilitation Human Resources Manager to ensure RSA standards. DBVI put an emphasis on hearing the voice of the customer and a Customer Centered Culture.

How this is accomplished:

- New Staff Training
- Opportunities for higher education
- Personnel standards
- Individual Development Plans
- Customer Centered Culture
- The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People
- Other trainings attended
- Future Plans

Strategy 13: DBVI will implement strategies designed to enable DBVI customers to access higher wage employment through short-term training. (Fred Jones)

Fred discussed the importance of having more consumer's complete short-term training. He discussed the possibility of working closely with vocational tech centers and explained that the new WIOA (Workforce Initiative Opportunity Act) law will measure how many people obtain certificates and degrees.

SRC Suggestions:

Pam: Student finished LEAP last year and is now staying in VT. Essex Tech will be having her back for the second year. There wasn't enough relationship building last year with her peers and there will be this year. Essex Tech is modifying the second year for her since she doesn't have classes to attend (looking for a day long work experience for her). This individual is also considering getting a degree in business to open her own bakery.

Melissa: doing a demonstration of how a visually impaired student can navigate a kitchen with adaptive technology.

Strategy 15: DBVI will partner with the Vermont Department of Labor to provide employment training options for dual DBVI/DOL customers. (Jean Palmer/Melissa Hoellerich)

Rose is the director of the resource center at Department of Labor (DOL) and we should invite her to a DBVI staff meeting and try to encourage some communication; develop a better understanding of how to access the training funds at DOL.

Strategy 16: DBVI will provide technology training for people who need to prepare for a job or succeed at a current job. (John Young)

Fred and John would go to each region once a month and use the conference room space. John would talk to consumers about technology. They will also explore the possibility of using Twitter to communicate important assistive technology information to DBVI consumers.

Strategy 14: DBVI will implement activities designed to reduce the number of individuals who are closed in a status 28 (not employed). (Fred Jones)

DBVI director discussed the importance of analyzing the different reason for Status 28 closures. The main reasons currently are consumers are no longer interested in services or DBVI is unable to locate or contact the person.

DBVI will be measured by this in the future (RSA). There are many reasons why someone might end up closing as a Status 28.

Results of Public Meeting—DBVI State Plan (Held January 26, 2016)

There were no comments either in-person or submitted in writing for the Public Hearing this year.

DBVI Response to SRC Input:

- DBVI and the SRC worked collaboratively to review Statewide Assessment and update Goals and Priorities.
- The SRC and DBVI agree that educating the public about blindness is very important. Two new success story videos were created and on the DBVI website www.dbvi.vermont.gov. The SRC gave ideas about how to proceed with success stories.
- The SRC reviewed and gave input on the DBVI section of the statewide assessment, new goals and strategies, and WIOA Unified Plan.

(b) Request for Waiver of State Wideness.

Vermont DBVI is not requesting a waiver of state wideness.

(c) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System.

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system with respect to:

- (1) Federal, State, and local agencies and programs;
- (2) State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;
- (3) Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;
- (4) Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and
- (5) State use contracting programs.

At this time DBVI has no cooperative agreements with agencies of this description.

(d) Coordination with Education Officials.

Describe:

- (1) The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.
- (2) Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to: 12 Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(iii) of WIOA 26
 - (A) Consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;
 - (B) Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;
 - (C) Roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
 - (D) Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

Interagency Agreement with Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Vermont Agency of Education as required by the Rehabilitative Services Administration

September 2014

*See Below for Details

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PURPOSE

Section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and 34 CFR 361.22 (b) requires that the State Plan for Titles I and VI-B provide information on the coordination of transition services between state Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired with the state educational agency. The agreement, at a minimum, must provide for (1) consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including vocational rehabilitation services; (2) transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and education personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of the IEP; (3) the roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency; and (4) procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

There is currently in existence an Interagency Agreement between Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) and Agency Of Human Services (AHS), as required by IDEA, dated June 2005. The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) is part of that agreement. This agreement is between AOE and DBVI and is specific to DBVI activities.

MISSION/GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AOE, the local education agencies (LEA) and AHS, of which DBVI is a part, work together to assure that children and youth with disabilities, ages 3-22, receive services for which they are eligible in a timely and coordinated manner. Ultimate responsibility to ensure a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities lies with AOE and responsibility to provide a FAPE lies with the LEA. AHS is responsible for supporting students and their families toward successful outcomes in their broader functioning consistent with federal law including 34 CFR §300.142 as well as state law. These agencies will work together to assure the needs of eligible students with disabilities are met, services are coordinated and integrated, funds are efficiently used, and a dispute resolution process is in place to resolve interagency policy and funding disputes when a conflict occurs.

In recognition of the importance of providing a smooth transition from education to adult life, transition services for eligible students will be community-driven, involve a comprehensive system including AHS, AOE, employers, the workforce system and youth and their families. These services will be provided with the intent to increase the number of youth who are blind or visually impaired entering employment, further education, and independent or supported living.

AREAS OF AGREEMENT

I. COORDINATION OF SERVICES

DBVI Transition Service Coordination for Students who are blind or visually impaired in Vermont's High Schools

1. *DBVI Services for Students who are blind or visually impaired*

DBVI is committed to the successful transition of young adults who are blind or visually impaired from school to work or further education or training. DBVI is required under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, see 29 U.S.C. §720 et seq. and pertinent federal regulation, see 34 CFR §361.22; the IDEA, and pertinent federal regulation, see 34 CFR §§300.347 (b) and 300.348; and the Assistive Technology Act of 2004, see 29 U.S.C. §3001 et seq., to coordinate policies and procedures with education officials that facilitate the transition of students who are blind or visually impaired from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services from the DBVI agency.

"Transition services" are defined as a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that (a) is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; b) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and (c) includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

2. *DBVI Counselors*

DBVI Counselors work with high school students who are blind or visually impaired. DBVI Counselors are specially trained in blindness as it relates to vocational rehabilitation.

3. *Early Identification*

DBVI Counselors will maintain at least annual contact with the General VR Transition Counselors who cover the schools in their region to ensure early identification of blind or visually impaired students who: are in special education; are receiving 504 accommodations; are receiving regular education services, who may be eligible for DBVI transition services. DBVI Counselors will meet at a minimum in the beginning and in the spring of each school year with the Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, and Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist in their region to ensure early identification of students who are blind or visually impaired. This early

identification occurs at the age required by federal and state law and includes formal DBVI involvement in IEP/Transition Team meetings and in 504 plan meetings, as requested by the school staff, student or families. DBVI Counselors will communicate with appropriate school staff including Special Education Case Managers and 504 Coordinators. DBVI will provide brochures to schools for distribution to students who are blind or visually impaired and their families. Additionally, local Core Transition Teams and other partners will provide the DBVI Counselor with a forum to discuss projections of numbers of students who will need transition services from DBVI.

Outreach activities by DBVI, will include:

- a) Sharing the DBVI Brochure with Special Education staff, students and their families;
- b) Sharing the DBVI Brochure with all Teachers of the Visually Impaired in Vermont;
- c) Sending an introduction letter to all blind or visually impaired high school students and their families explaining DBVI transition services;
- d) Finding ways to identify out-of-school youth and students at risk for dropping out of school;
- e) Visits with Special Education Administrators at their regional meeting at least annually; and
- f) Meeting with families and students at the local DBVI office or other settings at the choice of families and students.

The DBVI Counselor's role in this early identification is primarily guidance and assistance during the transition planning process. The Counselor may also assist the school IEP and 504 team members in their transition planning. These activities may include:

- a) Consultation with special educators, other school staff, and community partners about post-secondary education and employment options;
- b) Be a resource for school transition teams regarding local community services and long term supports;
- c) Provide guidance and assistance in IEP and transition planning to the school IEP team members;
- d) Provide clarification and guidance to the school IEP team on whether or not a student would qualify for DBVI services;
- e) Provide tools and technical assistance to the school IEP team to properly assess students interests and vocational goals; and
- f) Provide orientation and explanation about DBVI services to student and family.

Once a student and family express interest in pursuing DBVI services, the DBVI Counselor will take an application.

4. Referrals to DBVI

Consultation should intensify when a student is two years from graduation. DBVI should initiate intake at least 18 months before the student is scheduled to graduate or exit from high school. Students at risk for dropping out or students with complex needs may be considered for earlier intake.

DBVI will not serve persons under age 18 without the permission of a parent, guardian, or legal representative unless they are emancipated.

Once a student or youth is found eligible for DBVI services, services provided may include:

- a) counseling and consultation about the development of the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) that is coordinated with the IEP or 504 plan;
- b) vocational assessment;
- c) job development;
- d) progressive employment activities and training; and
- e) other paid services.

The IPE must be developed and written before the student leaves school.

5. *Purchased Services*

The DBVI Counselor shall make the school IEP and 504 Team aware of the scope of DBVI services available, including financial assistance for post-secondary education.

As determined on an individual basis, DBVI may provide for Assistive Technology, (AT), services and devices for a DBVI-eligible student in the semester before exiting school and entering post-secondary education or training. The AT services must meet the following criteria:

- a) they are part of an IEP or 504 plan with coordinated transition goals;
- b) they are part of an approved IPE; and
- c) they are necessary to accomplish a successful transition to employment, post-secondary education or training.

During the student's Transition Year (nine months before exiting school), DBVI may support Employment Specialist services on a job site, which is expected to continue post-graduation. DBVI may pay for an Employment Specialist for up to twelve (12) months if ongoing supports have been negotiated with a long-term services provider (e.g., mental health agency, DDAS, private provider, or through the use of natural supports).

As determined by the DBVI Counselor, services may be provided prior to the last year in school if essential to the IPE goals and/or their development and there are no other funding options. As determined by the Counselor, other time-limited services may be purchased consistent with the comparable services and benefits requirement of 34 CFR §361.53.

II. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF DBVI

For eligible students, DBVI will pay for services to the extent that funds are available at the time the services are needed, including assistive technology services and devices that are identified in an approved IPE in keeping with DBVI's policies:

- a) are consistent with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and implementing regulations including but not limited to 34 C.F.R. §361.53; the IDEA, including but not limited to 34 C.F.R. §§300.5, 300.6, 300.347(b), and 300.348; the Assistive Technology Act of 2004, PL 108-364; and Vermont State Plan; and
- b) promote or facilitate the accomplishment of vocational rehabilitation goals and any intermediate rehabilitation objectives identified in the student's IPE to ensure the student's successful transition to employment, post-secondary education, or training.

1. Other Funding Obligations

For all other services that may be considered special education and related services, financial responsibility will be assigned consistent with federal law including 34 C.F.R. § 300.142, state law and the following understanding:

- a) AOE shall be responsible to ensure a FAPE to students with disabilities and LEAs shall be responsible to provide a FAPE.
- b) The AOE will work with LEAs to maximize receipt of federal Medicaid dollars available for reimbursement of medically related services provided to Medicaid-eligible students.
- c) The AOE will identify best practices concerning cost containment and the provision of FAPE consistent with 16 V.S.A. §2959b. AOE will provide technical assistance in this area to LEAs.
- d) The IDEA does not limit the responsibility of non-educational agencies from providing or paying for some or all of the costs of FAPE to children with disabilities. However, this shall not be construed to expand or otherwise alter state and/or federal law requirements imposed on any non-education agency.

2. Conditions and Terms of Reimbursement

If the local DBVI office fails to provide or pay for services for which they are responsible, the LEA (or state agency responsible for developing the child's IEP) shall provide or pay for these services to the child in a timely manner. The LEA or state agency may then claim reimbursement for the services from DBVI and DBVI shall reimburse the LEA or state agency in accordance with the terms of this agreement.

III. DISPUTE RESOLUTION RELATIVE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT

Where the local DBVI office and LEA are unable to resolve any of the issues pursuant to this agreement, a referral may be made to the AOE secondary transition staff and DBVI Central Office for resolution. AOE Secondary Transition staff includes: the State Director of Special Education; Special Education Consultant for Post-Secondary Transition Specialist; Director for Integrated Support for Learning Team; others designated by the AOE Secretary. DBVI Central Office staff include: DBVI Director and others designated by DBVI Director.

Where this staff is unable to resolve a dispute, the Secretary of AOE and the Division Director of DBVI may resolve the issues and render a written decision.

Nothing in this agreement shall be construed to limit any existing substantive or procedural protections of state or federal law or regulations.

IV. QUARTERLY REVIEW

The secondary transition staff at AOE (described above) and the DBVI Director or their designees will meet at least quarterly to review existing data and evaluate the implementation of this agreement in order to improve the results for eligible children who are blind or visually impaired and the operations of local and regional teams of educators and human services providers.

Additionally, DBVI and AOE will look for opportunities to collaborate to support the attainment of vocational and post-secondary training goals for students who are blind or visually impaired in all Vermont high schools.

V. NON-DISCRIMINATION

The parties shall comply with all applicable state and federal non-discrimination laws and regulations including the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Vermont's Public Accommodations Act.

VI. AMENDMENTS OR MODIFICATIONS

Any provision in this agreement may be rendered null and void by changes in federal or state law that prevent either or both parties from fulfilling the terms of the agreement. If this circumstance should arise, each party agrees to notify the other as soon as reasonably possible.

During the term of the agreement, either party that is a signatory to this agreement may submit a written request to amend or modify this memorandum. When such a request is made, the parties shall meet without unnecessary delay to consider the proposed amendment.

VII. TERM

This agreement in its present form or as modified shall be effective as of the date of signing and shall remain in effect for five years. The agreement shall be reviewed annually by the parties and may be extended by the mutual written agreement of the parties. Prior to the expiration of the agreement the parties shall meet to negotiate and execute a successor agreement. In the event a successor agreement is not in place when this agreement is due to expire, this agreement will remain in effect until a successor agreement is concluded.

Fred Jones, DBVI Director

Rebecca Holcombe, Secretary, AOE

Signed 9/29/2014 by Fred Jones

Signed 9/26/2014 by Rebecca Holcombe

Date

Date

(e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations.

Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers:

DBVI maintains agreements and contracts with two non-profit organizations and CRPs in particular. The Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) provides direct teaching and rehabilitation training to Vermonters who are visually impaired. They are the only other organization in Vermont providing Orientation and Mobility and Vision Rehabilitation services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Due to the close working nature and cooperation there are no duplication of services. DBVI also works closely with The Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation (VABIR) to provide job development and soft skills training by Employment Consultants.

(f) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services.

Describe the designated State agency’s efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

The VT DBVI chooses to send the majority of its funding (\$30,000 of \$36,000) for supported employment to support the system of the General VR Supported Employment coordination. In this fashion DBVI has access to all the agreements for Supported Employment services agreed to by VR, such as agreements with the Division of Disability Services, TBI services, the Department of Mental Health and the local CRTs.

Because of its small size and the fact that it serves a low incidence population DBVI feels that it can serve the few individuals seeking supported employment best in the above manner. Most individuals who qualify for supported employment and are visually impaired are served by other agencies as their primary disability has identified as other than vision impairment. The small amount of funding that DBVI does keep can be used to support job coaches and similar services in the rare cases that are on DBVI's caseload.

Below is an explanation of the General Vocational Rehabilitation Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services.

DVR has a well-established agreement with the Vermont Development Disabilities Services Division (DDSD) to provide extended services for individuals with developmental disabilities. The primary source of funding for extended services for individuals with developmental disabilities is Home and Community-based Medicaid Waiver funds. In FY 2016, DVR will fund 14 programs serving people with developmental disabilities. DVR provides \$1,016,364 in Section 110 funding to support the upfront placement and support costs. DDSD provides the ongoing extended supports through Home and Community Based Medicaid Waiver funding.

DVR funds supported employment services for youth with emotional/behavioral disabilities in partnership with the Department of Mental Health, Children's Division. The JOBS programs are a model for serving this high needs and high risk population. DVR provides the upfront job placement and support through grants to community agencies. The extended supports are provided through Medicaid Global Commitment funds.

For individuals with other disabilities, no state funding for extended services exists in Vermont. As a result there are limited options for providing extended services for individuals with brain injuries, sensory disabilities, severe learning disabilities and other disabilities. There are some limited options to use Social Security Administration Impairment Related Work Expenses or Plans to Achieve Self Support. These options however, are only feasible in a minority of cases.

(g) Coordination with Employers.

Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

- (1) VR services; and
- (2) transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.

DBVI collaborates with General Vocational Rehabilitation in efforts to establish relationships with Vermont businesses. This coordinated approach is desired by the businesses and creates meaningful points of contact. Below is a description of the approach established by General VR and used by DBVI.

DUAL CUSTOMER DESIGN

Vermont's dual-customer approach considers both individuals with disabilities *and* the business community as key customers of the Vocational Rehabilitation program. To that end, Vermont DVR has established a cadre of Business Account Managers across the state whose primary responsibility is to develop and sustain relationships with the businesses in their respective communities. The Business Account Managers also facilitate local Employment Teams made up of the various employment programs serving Vermonters with disabilities. The Employment Teams are designed to improve collaboration between programs and streamline employer outreach

in order to maximize resources and increase opportunities for candidates served by the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

In addition to the Business Account Managers, Vermont DVR and DBVI contracts Employment Consultants, who provide placement services and assistance, including retention services, to individual candidates. These Employment Consultants, in concert with their respective Business Account Managers, are in the community developing contacts and establishing relationships with businesses of all sizes. Due to the rural nature of Vermont, and the fact that trusting relationships are developed over time, Vermont has developed ways to track employer engagement over time.

EMPLOYER DATA

Tracking of employer outreach is maintained utilizing Salesforce, a Customer Relations Management (CRM) solution used by many large corporations. All Business Account Managers and Employment Consultants enter information into this system (only business information is captured, there is no client information and the information is transparent to everyone). To track employer engagement, the following information is gathered:

Opportunities:

Opportunities are defined as any activity, paid or un-paid, offered by a particular business. These activities range from informational interviews and job shadows to short-term work experiences and paid employment. All opportunities are captured for each business.

Contacts:

Contacts are defined as the individuals in a business with whom Employment Consultants and/or Business Account Managers have developed a relationship. In many cases these contacts are Hiring Managers, Owners and Supervisors.

Activities:

Each time an Employment Consultant or Business Account Manager interacts with a contact, an activity note is entered into Salesforce. This allows all Employment Team members to see a running history of conversations and activities with that business.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DVR CUSTOMERS

Business outreach has been a priority for Vermont DVR because:

1. In developing relationships over time, we are able to position ourselves as a staffing service with a variety of options for businesses to consider;
2. Coordinated business outreach, captured in Salesforce, allows for greater variety in the kinds of businesses we are meeting, and the concurrent variety in opportunities for DVR candidates;
3. Gathering information on businesses willing to offer worksite experiences, company tours, informational interviews... etc., will better support career exploration and skill development for both adults and students;
4. Our business partners can support Pre-Employment Transition Services activities in schools, including practice interviews, company tours and overviews, and identifying summer employment opportunities;
5. Business partners can support the work of our In-School Transition Counselors, providing information on industry trends, skill requirements and other factors related to particular employment sectors;
6. By engaging businesses in working with students, the students will have a better understanding of their local labor market through work experiences, job shadows and paid employment. This in turn should prepare them for transition to either post-secondary education or employment.

(h) Interagency Cooperation. Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

(1) the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act.

DBVI and the State Medicaid Agency, the Vermont Department of Health Access (DVHA), have not had a formal established working relationship. The two agencies have collaborated for the provision and payment for Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) for individuals with low vision. DBVI will seek technical assistance from RSA on developing a formal MOU to outline the working relationship going forward. We anticipate a more formal partnership will yield additional opportunities to develop employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

(2) the State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental Disabilities.

DBVI follows the same system as the Vocational Rehabilitation Division. The partnership between the Developmental Disabilities Services Division (DDSD) and Vocational Rehabilitation is well established. VR and DDSD braid funding to promote a joint Supported Employment effort to meet Federal rules and guidelines. VR policies and procedures instruct counselors to open a case for DDSD consumers who may require long-term services regardless of level of disability. This joint partnership utilizes Title 110 and VI-B funding to provide Supported Employment grant funding for each DDSD provider. DDSD provides the individual long term employment support through Medicaid Waiver funding. The DVR grant model braided with Medicaid Waiver funding has yielded better outcomes than a fee-for-service approach, and both employment rate and new employment placement numbers have risen across the state through this partnered effort. DVR and DDSD leadership meet at least quarterly to maintain the partnership.

(3) the State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

DBVI does not have formal contractual program with the Department of Mental Health and the Designated Agencies (DAs) to deliver and meet outcomes for mental health services. DBVI does work directly with the (DAs) to support individuals who are Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) eligible and meet the supported employment service criteria. These individuals often need specialized instruction to learn adaptive blindness skills that are needed for employment. These include Orientation and Mobility and Rehabilitation Therapy Skills. DBVI and community partners have offered workshops the CRT providers about the types of specialize blindness instruction that is available to individuals served by the mental health system who are employed or seeking employment.

(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development.

Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

(1) Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

(A) **Qualified Personnel Needs.** Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

(i) the number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;

(ii) the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and (iii) projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

(B) **Personnel Development.** Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

(i) a list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;

(ii) the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down

by type of program; and

(iii) the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

(2) *Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel.* Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

(3) *Personnel Standards.* Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

(A) standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or –recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and

(B) the establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

(4) *Staff Development.* Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

(A) a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

(B) procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

(5) *Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs.* Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

(6) *Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.* As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

(1) Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

(A) Qualified Personnel Needs

The Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) operates in the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL) in the Agency of Human Services (AHS). DBVI employs 10 full time positions and one half time position.

DBVI is organized to allow a structure for advancement based on increased skills and job responsibilities. DBVI operates under a structure that allows for increased professional abilities, improved services and knowledgeable management by recognizing the individual skills within.

At this time DBVI has sufficient VR counselor capacity to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation clients. Each of the four regional offices has one counselor and one rehab associate positions. The four regional offices are Burlington, Montpelier, Rutland, and Springfield. The director of DBVI, assistive technology trainer, and the administrative assistant work out of the central office that is temporarily located in Williston. Presently DBVI has 3 job developers. This service is contracted through Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation. Technology services are provided by the assistive technology trainer and a contracted professional rehabilitation technology expert. Overall supervision is provided by the division director.

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Blind Services Director	1	0	0
2	Administrative Assistant	.5	0	0
3	Senior Rehabilitation Counselor	2	0	0
4	Rehabilitation Counselor	2	0	0
5	Rehabilitation Associated I	3	0	0
6	Rehabilitation Associate II	0	0	0
7	Rehabilitation Associate III	1	0	0
8	Adaptive Technology Trainer	1	0	0

Under the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living, DBVI collaborates with the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for: Staff Development and Training Coordination, Transition Services, Benefits Counseling, Supported Employment, and the business office.

In FFY 2015 DBVI Counselors served an average of 87 consumers annually. It appears that DBVI will serve a similar average of consumers per Counselor for FFY 2016. At this time DBVI has maintained a high level of performance. Staffing levels are sufficient.

Projections of personnel that will be needed in five years to meet the demand of the number of individuals to be served are static. This is due in part to the way the DBVI program is structured, which will allow for fluctuation or increases in the number of individuals while continuing to provide quality service.

(B) Personnel Development

Vermont has no accredited graduate school offering a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. To meet the Comprehensive System for Professional Development (CSPD) standards, a counselor needs either a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a master's degree in a related field plus completion of four additional core rehabilitation courses.

Assumption College, University of Massachusetts, and Springfield College of Human Services typically have a range of 35-45 students who graduate with a master's or CAG degree in Rehabilitation Counseling per year. These graduates would be qualified to fill counseling vacancies without additional coursework. New England colleges, which offer degrees in Social Work, Special Education, School Guidance, Mental Health Counseling, or Community Mental Health Services, also produce qualified graduates with the requirement to complete the four additional core rehabilitation courses.

Presently, all DBVI rehabilitation counselors have met the educational requirements. One (1) DBVI rehabilitation associate and our administrative assistant (.5) are enrolled voluntarily in a master's degree program in Rehabilitation Counseling through the University of Southern Maine's (USM) on-line, distance learning program funded by an RSA long-term training grant to USM.

In the past year, one (1) DBVI rehabilitation counselor completed the CSPD required rehabilitation courses as of December 2015.

(2) Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

DBVI recruits qualified personnel through Assumption College, University of Massachusetts, and Springfield College of Human Services who have received a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. These graduates meet the highest standard of education and are able to obtain certification at the highest level for this field. DBVI also recruits qualified personnel in a related field such as Social Work, Special Education, School Guidance, Mental Health Counseling, or Community Mental Health Services from New England colleges by posting positions on internal employment pages of the various college websites. All of these graduates are candidates for counseling vacancies if they are willing to complete the four core rehabilitation courses.

DBVI recruits professionals with an expertise in rehabilitation and knowledge of visual diagnosis and the implications of visual disability. State personnel policies require DBVI to consider qualified applicants on the Reduction in Force list before other applicants. DBVI advertises openings through the State recruitment system, through local newspapers, on-line on www.CareerBuilder.com or www.Indeed.com and recruits personnel and individuals with disabilities and minority backgrounds to ensure a diverse qualified professional staff. DBVI constantly checks its caseload for interested and appropriately skilled individuals to provide services to Vermonters with vision impairments. DBVI ensures a high standard of qualified personnel with training directed toward an expertise for working with people with visual impairment. This is done through close collaboration with the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Rehabilitation Associates are recruited with a strong preference given to those with Bachelor's degrees and a strong commitment to blind services. Rehabilitation Associates with a bachelor's degree are encouraged to take the CSPD required Masters level courses. They are encouraged to pursue a master's level program in preparation for retention of qualified personnel. Through flexible work schedules and approved time off, DBVI makes it as convenient as possible to pursue degrees and education. DBVI will continue to support staff members who want to further their relevant education, as this will benefit the whole staff through projects and shared information. DBVI supports the staff and its professional development through public recognition and opportunities for job advancement through a developed career ladder within the division.

New staff participates in a training program that covers information appropriate to serving individuals who have vision loss. Trainings address the implications of visual loss and services such as orientation and mobility, rehabilitation teaching, and low vision service. In addition, training and consultation occurs with our rehabilitation technology consultant on an ongoing basis.

(3) Personnel Standards

(A) Standards that are consistent national or State-approved certification, licensing, registration.

DBVI follows the same standard used by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to be in compliance with Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992. This requires State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to establish qualified personnel standards for rehabilitation personnel. This addresses the qualifications necessary to meet the highest standards which are required in the State of Vermont. DBVI follows standards set forth in the Comprehensive System for Professional Development (CSPD). This prescribes a national standard for vocational rehabilitation counselor qualifications. This standard gives highest priority to counselors with a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. The second level of priority is for counselors with related degrees in social work, psychology, mental health counseling or special education. This group must complete four additional courses to meet the standard: Foundations of Rehabilitation, Career Counseling, Vocational Assessment, and Medical and Psychosocial Aspects of Disability.

All efforts are made to hire new Counselors into this standard. When this is not possible, new hires are required, by written agreement, to attain the standard in a reasonable amount of time. The availability of on-line course work should allow any new hires to reasonably take the four "core" courses or any other course work they would need to reach this standard.

DBVI has a standard of Bachelor's degree for new Rehabilitation Associates. This standard lays the groundwork for moving Associates into graduate programs, helping to assure DBVI of maintaining qualified staff.

Presently all DBVI Rehab counselor positions are filled by qualified professionals. All staff receives extensive training to help them learn and understand services for visually impaired individuals and the implication caused by visual loss. Training provided is focused around meeting with other highly trained vision professionals both within DBVI and from our sister agency, the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. All new employees receive training with a qualified rehabilitation therapist, a low vision therapist and orientation and mobility instructor. In addition they are scheduled to meet with our rehabilitation technology specialist to learn about how adaptive equipment can enhance job opportunities. They will meet with professionals from Vermont Association of Business Rehabilitation and Industry to learn about job placement. The performance expectations of all newly hired staff are to meet all the expected standards established for the position.

DBVI allows for a flexible working schedule, makes training assistance available, supports state, regional and national learning options and is strongly supportive of the time, effort, and commitment expended by each staff member to establish and maintain educational standards.

DBVI encourages the use of training funds for staff to use to attain and maintain professional standards and to maintain and enhance their professional capabilities. To maintain training and skill levels, DBVI constantly seeks and distributes information and training opportunities for staff at the regional and national level. DBVI maintains current educational material through journals, Internet sites and information gathered at conferences and trainings. DBVI works with the Staff Development and Training Coordination at DVR to ensure inclusion in opportunities

offered by educational institutions for vocational rehabilitation professionals. Opportunities for on-line and distance learning are also available.

With a small staff, that includes four Rehabilitation Counselors and four Rehabilitation Associates, DBVI can easily assess training and staff development needs.

(B) Understanding labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities

DBVI will ensure that personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities by using skills previously learned during training, presented by, Dr. Paul Harrington from the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University and the VT Department of Labor. This training provided counselors with information and skills to match the needs of their consumers with the needs of the local labor market. Training enhanced counselor's ability to interpret labor market information to assist their consumers to make informed career decisions and effectively work as a team with job placement staff. Counselors are better able to identify training and post-secondary education options that are in demand in the local labor market. Staff are aware of trainings available for high wage, high demand and high growth job opportunities for their visually impaired clients. DBVI will stay current in understanding the evolving labor market through collaboration with the Department of Labor and by maintaining a close relationship with VABIR (Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation).

(4) Staff Development:

(A) A system of staff development with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement and rehabilitation technology>

The main objective in staff development at the Division for the Blind will focus on assessment, vocational counseling, job placement and rehabilitation technology in relation to visual impairment. Training for counselors will focus on the essentials of a comprehensive vocational assessment. This will address aspects of how a person with a visual impairment can access independence and achieve a high standard of independence. Our mission to, "support Vermonters who are blind or visually impaired in their efforts to achieve or sustain their economic independence, self-reliance, and social integration to a level consistent with their interests, abilities, and informed choice".

Every year each DBVI employee meets with the division director to discuss their IDP (Individual Development Plan). Meeting's focus on how each employee can contribute to DBVI's goals and strategies; improve customer satisfaction; and support policies, philosophy, competencies and future vision. In addition, the purpose of the IDP is to ensure that each DBVI employee receive appropriate and adequate training to meet the professional standards and requirements of their position. Discussions with the DBVI director allow employees an opportunity to identify their career ladder. DBVI staff are given opportunities to take on higher level duties backed by participation in education and training programs. This can lead to a higher step grade as determined by the VT Department of Human Resources.

DBVI has a partnership with the vocational rehabilitation Staff Development and Training Coordinator. DBVI meets with the Coordinator monthly to advise DBVI on upcoming trainings available within the Agency of Human Services and DVR and to work with DBVI on goals as outlined in the five year Vermont VR-Blind in-Service Training Grant. The Coordinator advises DBVI about trainings that meet the RSA standards. Needed trainings are determined through IDP developed by DBVI staff. DBVI staff are encouraged to participate in

training opportunities to increase leadership, partnering and collaboration skills that lead to increasing employment opportunities for people who are blind and visually impaired.

DBVI continues to expand projects directed toward our younger transition aged students and young adults. The project Great Expectations-Voices and Choices for the Future, Is a collaborative effort by DBVI, VABVI and VABIR. The purpose of the project is to increase employment skills and job seeking skills, promote positive mentoring, networking, obtain feedback from clients to improve services and to empower self-advocacy and self-reliance. This is accomplished through a series of planning meeting and seminars. DBVI will research and look at new ways to provide and increase services for transition aged youth.

DBVI staff receives ongoing training through local and regional in-state programs to stay current on: The National Library Services, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Resources, Diversity and numerous others. DBVI staff is especially diligent about perusing pertinent journals and research and disseminating relevant articles and information via the internet, at monthly staff meetings and through in-person collaborations. The DBVI central office maintains subscriptions to several noted journals in the field (e.g., Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness).

Through attendance at combined meetings, in-service training, and direct staff contact DBVI continues to seek ways to improve and enhance collaboration with other agencies. Many DBVI trainings are in collaboration with the general Vocational Rehabilitation agency in the Department of Disabilities Aging and Independent Living (DAIL). DBVI has greatly enhanced its collaboration with other organizations to the benefit of this division. In particular, the LEAP program for summer youth employment is a model of cooperation. This involves DBVI (provider of consumers, funding), Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (infrastructure, staff), Resource (jobs, staff), Linking Learning to Life (follow-up, e-mentoring), VT Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (IL training, transition staff) and the Gibney Family Foundation (funding). This is a unique residential program providing youth with vision impairments a summer employment opportunity, a community service experience and an independent living experience in an urban setting and a new option for a wilderness setting. DBVI is active with the Job Development Coalitions throughout the State of Vermont because of our work with Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation (VABIR). VABIR staff set up trial work experiences and on the job trainings. They explain financial incentives and ADA information. This program helps to provide a service to employers for long lasting job matches.

(B) Acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from other sources.

DBVI uses a management model developed by Robin Lawton. This model supports a strong belief and process for a "Customer Centered Culture". With training, guidance and consultation from Robin Lawton, DBVI continues the process of looking at customer satisfaction and organizational performance. When using this method of management it helps us to identify the "voice of the customer". DBVI has incorporated this model of management into our service delivery. Training has been provided to our SRC, the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the DBVI staff. The main dimensions of the model are: Focus on the customer, Eliminate ambiguity, Include customer priorities, Empower the end user, Define success, Reduce ambiguity of language, Link customer and operational priorities, Integrate and leverage existing initiatives, Focus on improvement, Address outcome first, process last, Satisfy strategic objectives as well as operations, Improve knowledge products first, Emphasize sustainability of new practices, and Challenge traditional assumptions. Using this model DBVI strives to improve customer satisfaction as we decrease ambiguity and improve

communication. It allows a method to measure successful outcomes based on the "voice of the customer". This past year DBVI in collaboration with our SRC, set up 4 town meetings to allow a process for hearing the voice of the customer. This allowed DBVI a way to collect and analyze information that is being used in the development of DBVI's strategic planning.

Training and consultation provided by Robin Lawton allowed DBVI staff to improve a method for providing quality customer satisfaction and a higher level of performance. Using strategies from the Customer Centered Culture, DBVI created "Your Guide to Employment Services". The guide is a folder of information that is used during the Initial Interview with a customer. It contains customer friendly language that explains who we are, our process, examples of successful clients and the types of services that a person can expect from participating in the employment program. This welcome packet given to customers provides information to increase communication and clarity by finding a common language. DBVI uses input from our customers to ensure information is accessible, comprehensive, empowering, understandable and informative. DBVI continues to develop new tools and enhance the Guide to Employment Services.

This past fiscal year the entire DBVI staff participated in a series of Franklin Covey trainings. Together, DBVI staff studied "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People". This style of management has been incorporated into the team as it enhances effectiveness, responsibility, personal growth and vision. Our team building approach uses a win-win philosophy, which helps to increase understanding and communication. DBVI supports creative cooperation toward team building. Teams are more effective in analyzing, improving and providing services for people who are visually impaired. The DBVI Division Director is meeting with teams around the State to discuss personal and team vision statements. The 7 Habits of Effective People, and the Customer Centered Culture have a core similarity in that both emphasize "Start with the end in mind" or "Address outcome first, process last".

Motivational Interviewing-DBVI has partnered with VR to provide training in Motivational Interviewing. Several staff have completed training session. This training allows an opportunity for staff to receive feedback and support using the counseling techniques used. In addition monthly video conferences are being offered from May 2014 through December 2015 with the consultant, Manthey Consulting, to ensure ongoing skill development. A select number of staff will receive an additional four-day, train-the-trainer session to ensure sustainability of the approach within the organization. Staff will have the opportunity to attend or host coaching circles. Skills will be shared with existing and new staff as they enter the organization.

DBVI makes arrangements each year with Darick Wright, Low Vision and Orientation and Mobility Specialist from Umass Boston. Trainings are arranged for DBVI staff to provide a workshop on Visual Impairment. This annual training provide new staff with valuable information regarding functional low vision assessment. Trainings address reading and interpreting eye reports and relating them to functional ability in the work place. Darick Wright presents information on environmental assessments for clients work sites and how to determine functional limitations. Information is presented on different types of visual diagnosis and how this impacts an individual's performance.

Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired hosts an annual technology fair for DBVI professionals and DBVI clients. This is a hands on opportunity to explore adaptive devices. Electronic magnification, computer software, Illuminated canes, talking glucose meters, kitchen aids, hand held magnification, telescopic devices, writing aids and large print items will be demonstrated.

DBVI management will work toward providing an opportunity to have staff attend the Northeast Chapter of the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (NE/AER). NE/AER supports professionals who provide education and rehabilitation to individuals with visual impairments. Presentations will inform and educate attendees in all areas of vision education and rehabilitation of clients, young and old. Areas covered are: Computer program, apps supporting Independent Living Skills, medical advancements, expanded core and common core curriculum for transition aged students, psychosocial aspects of vision loss, new approaches to teaching O&M skills.

DBVI staff will continue to participate in trainings on relevant assessments needed for persons with visual impairment. These trainings will be presented by qualified vision professionals. Training will address new and relevant assistive technology for people who are blind and visually impaired and job analysis used to determine the need for a technology assessment and training. Ongoing consultation is available for staffs overall basic understanding of adaptive technology and how it can enhance an individual's job performance. Coordination and communication with low vision optometrists to enhance visual function in an employment situation is ongoing.

(5) Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

Describe how the designated state unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.

The Division for the Blind operates under the State of Vermont Agency of Human Services. The Agency of Human Services has clear policy regarding access to programs as needed to ensure meaningful access to persons with limited English proficiency. Information regarding policy can be accessed at:

<http://www.intra.ahs.state.vt.us/limited-english-proficiency>

This policy applies to all Agency Departments, offices and employees. It is the policy of the Agency of Human Services to provide language assistance as may be needed to ensure meaningful access to our programs. Each department and offices will take steps to provide assistance so that persons seeking services may communicate effectively with program providers and with Agency and department staff.

Departments must take steps to ensure persons seeking services are able to understand which services and benefits are available to them, and how they may best receive them.

The LEP information provides resources and links to resources dealing with written, face-to-face and over the phone communication with individuals for whom English is not the primary language. DBVI is also able to use an agency contract for phone and written translation of almost any language in the world. DBVI makes use of an on-line contact for interpreters of ASL for those consumers who are deaf.

(6) Coordination of Personnel Development Under the individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

Describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated state unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.

At this time DBVI is working to update a cooperative agreement with the new Agency of Education. DBVI has maintained cooperative agreements with the Department of Education, VABVI and the Department of Labor.

These agreements are meant to work toward a system of comprehensive and unduplicated services for youth and adults with vision impairments in Vermont. These agreements also provide for cross training among the staffs of the various organizations. Areas covered include employment, education and disability. In this way DBVI and the other partners work to ensure that all partner programs are accessible and available to DBVI consumers. DBVI is in constant contact with the staff of VABVI who has been working with a contract from the Vermont Department of Education to provide services under IDEA. DBVI counselors are in close communication with VR transition counselors. Together DBVI and VR collaborate in training and outreach for disabled students.

(j) Statewide Assessment.

Complete results of the FFY 12 to FFY 2015 Statewide Assessment can be found at:

www.dbvi.vermont.gov/whats-new/statewide-assessment/

Annual Estimates

Describe: (1) The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services.

(2) The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:

(A) The VR Program;

(B) The Supported Employment Program; and

(C) each priority category, if under an order of selection.

(3) The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and

(4) The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

Working Age Adults

Using numbers from the 2013 Prevalence report from the American Community Survey-One Year Estimate, DBVI estimates that there are approximately 6,506 Vermonters of working age (18-64) who are blind or severely visually impaired (meaning even with correction they are not able to easily read the newspaper). DBVI provides RSA defined services to approximately 5.3% of these individuals annually (350 in FFY115).

<http://www.afb.org/info/blindness-statistics/state-specific-statistical-information/vermont/235>

Projections for Vermont based on extrapolations from National Data: September 2013 Current Population Survey for all working age adults (16 to 64 years of age) who responded "yes" to the question "Is anyone blind or does anyone have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?"

<http://www.afb.org/section.aspx?SectionID=15&TopicID=413&SubTopicID=177>

- Of the approximately 12,842 people with vision loss in VT, it is estimated that 6,506 are working age adults (16 to 64 years of age—2013 ACS).
- Using the BLS national survey that shows 56% of those working age adults were not actively looking for work. This means we can estimate that **3,643** (of the 6,506 working age) are identified as "**not in the labor force.**"
- Using the BLS national survey that shows 44% of working age adults are actually considered "in the labor force." This means we can estimate **2,862** (of the 6,506 working age) are included **in the "labor force."**

- Using the BLS national survey that shows 13.4% of the labor force is unemployed. This means we can estimate **384** (of the approximate 2,862 working age in labor force) **are unemployed**.
- Using the BLS national survey that shows 38% of all working age were identified as employed. This means we can estimate that **2,472** (of the 6,506 working age) are identified as **employed**.

***Employment Data Pertaining to Working Age Adults with Vision Loss (16 to 64 Years of Age)**
<http://www.afb.org/info/blindness-statistics/interpreting-bls-employment-data/24>

Vermont Disability Status Report 2013

2013 Disability Status Report: Vermont Visually Impaired

<http://www.disabilitystatistics.org/index.cfm>

(Produced by Cornell from the American Community Survey)

Prevalence of Disability

- All Ages=13,800 (2.2% of 621,100)
- Ages 16-20= 500 (1.1% of 46,100)
- Ages 21-64= 6,100 (1.7% of 366,900)
- Ages 65-74= 1,500 (2.6% of 60,400)

Employed

- Ages 21-64= 2,300 (38.5% of 6,100)

Percentage Not Working but Actively Looking for Employment

- Ages 21-64= 100 (3.0% of 3,700)

Full Time Full Year Employment Rate

- Ages 21-64= 1,900 (30.8% of 6,100)

Median Earnings

- Ages 21-64= \$34,400 (MOE +/-12,370—base population=2,000)

Median Household Income

- Ages 21-64= \$30,200 (MOE +/-15,280—base population=5,000)

Poverty Rate

- Ages 21-64= 1,400 (22.9%—base population=6,100)

SSI Recipients

- Ages 21-64= 1,000 (17.2%—base population=6,100)

High School Diploma Only or Equivalent

- Ages 21-64= 2,000 (33.7%—base population=6,100)

Some College/Associates Degree Only

- Ages 21-64= 2,700 (45.0%—base population=6,100)

Bachelor's Degree or More

- Ages 21-64= 900 (14.5%—base population=6,100)

Health Insurance

- Ages 21-64= 5,600 (93.0%—base population=6,100)

*The confidence level includes a very large range based on the very low number of people surveyed. The data are, however, useful for overall planning.

DBVI Projections for Cost Per Employment Outcome FFY 2016:

- The cost per employment outcome will remain at the \$18,000 to \$19,000 level.
- Employment outcomes will increase to 75.

Measure 6 - Cost Per Employment Outcome	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FFY 2013
FY allocation	\$1,225,409	\$1,308,899	\$1,376,899	\$1,233,526	\$1,311,588
Employment outcomes	75	81	69	68	70
Cost per employment outcome (allocation/employment outcomes)	\$16,338.79	\$16,159.25	\$19,955.06	\$18,140.09	\$18,7367

DBVI Projections for Expenditure Rate FFY 2016:

- Assessment, Counseling, Guidance and Placement will be at the \$950,000 level.
- Total expenditures will be at the \$1,800,000 level.

- Total Section 110 Funds Expended on Services will be at the \$650,000 level.

Measure 7 - Consumer Expenditure Rate	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FFY 2013
Assessment, Counseling, Guidance and Placement	\$708,848	\$787,863	\$784,571	\$805,115	\$913,971
Total Expenditures (I-4)	\$1,628,971	\$1,802,481	\$1,646,676	\$1,781,059	\$1,887,622
Total Section 110 Funds Expended on Services	\$637,207	\$736,442	\$561,317	\$630,236	\$621,521

Case status information - Shows the flow of individuals through the program; from the RSA-113	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FFY 2013
Total Applicants beginning and during the fiscal year	135	143	101	128	122
Total eligible individuals at the beginning and during the fiscal year	117	133	104	131	128
Individuals in plan receiving services beginning and during the fiscal year	340	335	307	323	346

DBVI Projections for Case Status Information FFY 2016:

- The number of new plans will be 100.
- The number of individuals served through supported employment will be 10.
- The number of new applications to increase to 110.

New Applications (RSA 113)

FFY 2011—88

FFY 2012—111

FFY 2013—105

FFY 2014—112

FFY 2015—102

Number Served (02 status or higher-AP)

FFY 2011—401

FFY 2012—424

FFY 2013—434

FFY 2014—394

FFY 2015—391

Achieve Employment Outcome (RSA 113)

FFY 2011—69

FFY 2012—68

FFY 2013—70

FFY 2014—74

FFY 2015—90

Competitively Employed:

FFY 2011—49

FFY 2012—53

FFY 2013—46

FFY 2014—51

FFY 2015—57

Caseload Activity and Cost of Services

Total number of Individuals and Expenditures for Services (from RSA 2):

FFY 2011—373 individuals received purchased services for cost of \$556,959 (Excludes Post Employment)

FFY 2012--384 individuals received purchased services for cost of \$692,733 (Excludes Post Employment)

FFY 2013--328 individuals received purchased services for cost of \$621,521 (Excludes Post Employment)

Services Provided by DBVI Personnel (from RSA 2):

Assessment, Counseling, Guidance, and Placement

FFY 2011--\$784,571

FFY 2012--\$805,115

FFY 2013—\$913,971

FFY 2014—\$844,885

FFY 2015--\$863,383

Number of Employment Plans Developed (RSA 113):

FFY 2011—83

FFY 2012—106

FFY 2013—98

FFY 2014—96

FFY 2015—111

Supported Employment

FFY 2011—4

FFY 2012—10

FFY 2013—7

FFY 2014—10

FFY 2015—10

—
Total Section 110 Funds Expended on Service (RSA 2):

FFY 2011—\$561,317

FFY 2012—\$630,236

FFY 2013—\$621,521

FFY 2014--\$643,503

FFY 2015--\$852,930

(I) State's Goals and Priorities.

The designated State unit must:

- (1) Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.
- (2) Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.
- (3) Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
 - (A) the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
 - (B) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and
 - (C) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

DBVI Goals and Strategies 2016

FFY 2016 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2016 Measures	FFY 2017 Targets
<p>1. Economic Independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livable wage job and income • Stay employed at least 6 months • Stay employed one year or more 	<p>% Employment 2nd quarter after exit</p> <p>% Employment 4th quarter after exit</p>	<p>% Employment 2nd quarter after exit</p> <p>% Employment 4th quarter after exit</p> <p>(*Baseline determined in FFY 2016 and 2017. Part of WIOA Common Performance Measures)</p>
<p>2. Economic Independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credential Attainment • Measurable employment skill gains 	<p>% Credential Attainment</p> <p>% Measurable employment skill gains</p>	<p>% Credential Attainment</p> <p>% Measurable employment skill gains</p> <p>(*Baseline determined in FFY 2016 and 2017. Part of WIOA Common Performance Measures)</p>
<p>3. High school students within 6 months of graduation or exit from HS will obtain a job, or attend vocational training or college.</p>	<p>Within 6 months after graduation or exiting High school:</p> <p>% of individuals with a job</p> <p>% of individuals attending vocational training</p> <p>% of individuals attending college</p>	<p>Within 6 months after graduation or exiting High school:</p> <p>% of individuals with a job</p> <p>% of individuals attending vocational training</p> <p>% of individuals attending college</p>
<p>4. Consumer satisfaction with DBVI services will increase. Continue to create a Customer-Centered Culture.</p>	<p>Triennial consumer satisfaction survey.</p>	<p>DBVI will maintain overall consumer satisfaction at or above the 92% level (2015).</p>

<p>5. Consumer earnings will increase beyond the rate of inflation.</p>	<p>RSA Performance Indicator 1.5: DBVI wages compared to state average, and 1.6: own income as primary source of support.</p>	<p>1.5: DBVI consumer wages will increase from 79% in 2015 of state average to 82% of state average.</p> <p>1.6: DBVI will increase the difference between percent self-supporting at closure and application from 31% in 2015 to 32%.</p>
<p>6. More consumers will be employed.</p>	<p>RSA Performance Indicator 1.2: Percentage of DBVI consumers achieving an employment outcome.</p>	<p>1.2: DBVI consumers achieving an employment outcome will increase from 73% in 2015 to 78%.</p>
<p>7. Increase capacity to serve un-served or underserved populations; specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaf-Blind • Minority • Individuals who are transition age (14-24) • General Outreach to increase number of individuals served 	<p>Implementation of services targeted at underserved populations.</p>	<p>Increase the number of Deaf-Blind served from 3 in FFY 2015 to 5.</p> <p>Increase the percentage of transition age youth served to 22% from 21% in FFY 2015.</p> <p>Increase the percentage of high school students served to 7% from 6% in FFY 2015.</p> <p>Increase the number of individuals served who are minorities from 7 FFY 2015 to 9.</p>
<p>8. DBVI will work in collaboration with Creative Workforce Solutions and the DOL to ensure people who are blind or visually impaired have access to services through progressive employment opportunities and the state workforce investment system.</p>	<p>Increase the number of individuals served by both DBVI and DOL.</p> <p>As indicated on the DBVI tracking database (105-R)</p>	<p>DBVI will have a total of 10 customers who are served by DBVI and DOL together.</p>

9. DBVI will work to improve the outcomes of community supported employment providers serving individuals with developmental disabilities.	Number of 26 closures achieved through the supported employment programs.	In FFY 2015 DBVI served and collaborated with General VR for a total of 8 people working in the supported employment programs. This will increase to 10.
10. DBVI will work to improve the outcomes of community providers to build adaptive blindness skills.	Number of 26 closures achieved with assistance of VABVI services.	<p>In FFY 2015, a total of 92 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABVI, and 68 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 75 %).</p> <p>*Target is to stay within the 70-80% range. Increased from 40% in FFY 2011.</p>
11. DBVI will work to improve the outcomes of community providers to build skills for the workforce.	Number of 26 closures achieved with assistance of VABIR services.	<p>In FFY 2015, a total of 41 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABIR, and 29 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 71 %).</p> <p>*Target is to stay within the 70-80% range. Increased from 40% in FFY 2011.</p>

The SRC met on December 17, 2015 for final review and approval of these goals and priorities. Their input is documented in the Statewide Assessment and Input of the SRC sections.

(m) Order of Selection.

Not applicable.

(n) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI-B Funds.

(1) Specify the State's goals and priorities for funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

(2) Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including:

(A) the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and

(B) how the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with

the most significant disabilities.

DBVI realizes that it serves customers with significant disabilities who at times require vocational support beyond the scope of DBVI's standard services. It is for this reason that DBVI maintains a "Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU) with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). This MOU describes how funds will be utilized and services provided in the area of supported employment. Thus consumers who may require intensive services, beyond vision impairment issues, to acquire or maintain employment can be provided with the needed support.

This MOU provides \$30,000 of Title VI, Part B funds to DVR's Supported Employment Program. In exchange DBVI is able to have consumers avail themselves of a comprehensive and established program providing statewide coverage and the expertise of supported employment providers.

Because of the multiple barriers that some DBVI consumers face, the DVR Supported Employment Coordinator helps to determine the most appropriate agency for those with multiple disabilities. DVR may be the more appropriate agency for DBVI consumers in cases where multiple disabilities are present. This coordination, with extensive knowledge of statewide resources, particularly in areas of psychiatric and developmental disability services, can provide technical assistance and the ability to provide to DBVI staff and consumers the best combination of resources.

DBVI has a separate grant award of \$6,000 of Title VI, Part B funds to provide short-term support services to qualified consumers. This allows the provision for a contract with a support person, job coach on the job site, or enrollment in a specific program to obtain job skills.

(o) Strategies to Achieve the Goals and Priorities.

State's Strategies

Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act

(GEPA):

- (1) The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.
- (2) How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.
- (3) The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.
- (4) The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life

(including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services).

(5) If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State.

(6) Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.

(7) Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

(8) How the agency's strategies will be used to:

(A) achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;

(B) support innovation and expansion activities; and

(C) overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State VR Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.

DBVI Employment Strategies FFY 2016-2018

Strategy 1: DBVI will collaborate with Creative Workforce Solutions to find employment in accordance with the customer's interests and qualifications.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, and 12

Actions added from FFY16 needs assessment

- Create technology guidelines for the workplace/work experience
- Create worksite preparation guidelines to make sure appropriate accommodations are accessible before the work experience begins.
- Create short-term vocational assessment opportunities by placing individuals at ReSource or the Café to learn about their skills.

Actions added from FFY13 needs assessment

- Establish clear goals with VABIR staff to increase the number of Employment Outcomes, Work Experiences, OJT, and Volunteer Opportunities as tracked in the CWS database.
- Expand opportunities in the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program.

Strategy 2: All high school students who are blind or visually impaired will complete a DBVI Action Plan Transition form with their DBVI Counselor and IEP or 504 team.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed: 4

Actions added from FFY16 needs assessment

- Each DBVI Counselor will meet at the beginning of the school year with the Teachers of the Visually Impaired in their region to create a plan for opening eligible students in the DBVI VR program..
- Each DBVI Counselor will meet with the General VR Transition Counselor in their region.
- A DBVI Action Plan Transition form will be completed and updated annually for all eligible students..
- Participate in statewide Core Transition Teams. aContinue to increase student participation in the summer Learn Earn and Prosper (LEAP) summer work experiences and Employment Development Retreats during the school year.

Strategy 3: DBVI will promote employment by educating employers and providing opportunities for increased exposure to people who are blind or visually impaired. This will address “Societies reaction to blindness.”

Goal and Priority Area Addressed: 9

Actions added from FFY16 needs assessment

- Create products to bring and teach employers to understand the assistive equipment
- Create a network of ambassadors who demonstrate their assistive technology or canes and demonstrate to the employers about how they use technology to complete work tasks and travel independently.

Actions added from FFY13 needs assessment

- Create a video of people working at their job.
- Find opportunities to show the film “Going Blind” to employer groups at Chambers, Rotary’s, and public libraries.
- Find opportunities to teach employer groups about assistive technology.
- Encourage employers to visit the DBVI website.
- Explore the idea of connecting employers through discussion group.
- Work closely with GCEPD to promote employment of people with disabilities.

- Create educational activities for White Cane Day and Disability Awareness Month in October.
- Create a PSA involving an employed individual and company.
- Offer Simulations to demonstrate—“what is it like to be blind?”

Strategy 4: DBVI will create Consumer Driven Events to assist individuals as they prepare for employment.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed: 5

Actions added from FFY16 needs assessment

- Continue Great Expectations consumer driven events twice/year.
- Create workshops to develop interpersonal and employment skills
- Employment support groups (starting January 2016)

Actions added from FFY13 needs assessment

- Create networking events.
- Opportunities to practice interview and job readiness skills.
- Create peer mentoring opportunities for adjustment to blindness and technology.

Strategy 5: DBVI will create opportunities for access to information.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed: 5

Action added from FFY16 needs assessment

- Create opportunities for Peer to Peer Technology Instruction

Actions added from FFY13 needs assessment

- DBVI will continue to expand the information on the website and will work with the SRC for ideas.
- Use Customer-Centered Culture to determine “what types of information customers really want”?

Strategy 6: DBVI will address transportation challenges.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed: 11

Action added from FFY16 needs assessment

- Consider policy to pay for mileage and time of VABVI drivers in order to have a network of drivers available to meet transportation needs

Actions added from FFY13 needs assessment

- Participate in system level planning.
- Assist VABVI to increase the number of volunteer drivers—build data base.
- Promote the option for DBVI to pay for the first 60 days of a ride to the job.

Strategy 7: DBVI will improve communication with customers regarding expectations for DBVI services.

Goal and Priority Areas Addressed: 5

Actions added from FFY 16needs assessment

- DBVI will create an assessment instrument that is used just prior to services and when services end to identify the progress an individual made during their time working with DBVI. This will help DBVI report how the DBVI program assisted individuals to improve their circumstances in areas they report as becoming “better off.”

Actions added from FFY 13 needs assessment

- DBVI will develop a consistent statewide orientation to DBVI services which will be implemented in all four regional offices.
- DBVI will work within the principles of Customer-Centered Culture to make sure we are answering the question: “What does the consumer really want?”
- DBVI will continually evaluate timeliness, accuracy, and ease of obtaining services. DBVI will establish an ongoing closure survey. Results will be shared and evaluated with the SRC on an ongoing basis.
- Ask customers to evaluate DBVI products using the Customer-Centered Culture model.
- Implement a closure survey that can be sent to all closed cases in FFY 13.

Strategy 8: DBVI will increase capacity to serve underserved populations through the implementation of special projects.

Goal and Priority Area: 8

Actions added from FFY16 needs assessment

- Develop a set of outreach materials to be used at events across the state including outreach to minorities and underserved populations.

Actions added from FFY13 needs assessment

- Create and support Deaf-Blind SSP project.
- Coordinate with VR Transition Counselors, and the Teachers of the Visually Impaired to increase the number of transition students served. Create some documents that explain what DBVI can offer.
- Create a statewide system to track all visually impaired students as they graduate high school.
- Add 5-hours / week to the job developer position in Burlington to expand outreach efforts.

Strategy 9: DBVI will explore outreach strategies to increase applicants and diversify the DBVI caseload.

Goal and Priority Areas: 8

Actions added from FFY16 needs assessment

- Educate providers about the importance of timely referrals.
- Outreach to developmental services and mental health agencies that typically do not referred to DBVI.

Actions added from FFY13 needs assessment

- Each DBVI region will create an outreach plan for the year that includes outreach to minorities and other underserved or underrepresented individuals in each region.
- The job developer in Burlington will use an additional 5-hours/week to build relationships with community groups of minority populations.

Strategy 10: DBVI staff will have the tools to deliver services quickly to DBVI customers.

Goal and Priority Areas: 1 and 9

Actions added from FFY16 needs assessment

- DBVI will work with the job driven technical assistance center to learn new and innovative ways to prepare individuals for the workforce.

Actions added from FFY13 needs assessment

- DBVI will explore the use of purchasing laptops for staff to do their job more efficiently.
- DBVI will explore professional development opportunities with the TACE Center.

Strategy 11: DBVI will implement strategies designed to enable DBVI customers to access higher wage employment through short-term training.

Goal and Priority Areas: 1, 2, 3, 6, and 9

Actions added from FFY16 needs assessment

- DBVI will work closely with vocational technical education centers in Vermont to help high school students and adults prepare for the workforce.
- Establish relationships with vocational centers to get consumers trained for positions in the area
- Attend State Technical Education Director's Meeting

Actions added from FFY13 needs assessment

- Evaluate the impact of progressive employment on outcomes.
- Track education and training opportunities that lead to degrees or credentials.
- Establish working relationships with Vocational Tech Centers and track participation.

Strategy 12: DBVI will implement activities designed to reduce the number of individuals who are closed in a status 28 (not employed).

Goal and Priority Areas: 1 and 7

Actions added from FFY13 needs assessment

- DBVI will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of status 28 closures to identify any specific trends or issues that DBVI needs to address.

Strategy 13: DBVI will partner with the Vermont Department of Labor to provide employment training options for dual DBVI/DOL customers.

Goal and Priority Areas: 2 and 9

Actions added from FFY13 needs assessment

- DBVI will work closely with DOL to create and implement the Unified Plan with a common mission and vision to include all Vermonters in the workforce.

Actions added from FFY16 needs assessment

- DBVI will establish a system for tracking participation of DBVI customers who utilize DOL services and training.

- DBVI will work with CWS local teams and DOL to obtain employment needs of companies and then match DBVI customers with specific training.
- DBVI will invite DOL to a staff meeting to discuss collaboration ideas.

Strategy 14: DBVI will provide technology training for people who need to prepare for a job or succeed at a current job.

Goal and Priority Areas: 2 & 12

Actions added from FFY16 needs assessment

- Create a menu of training options ranging from expert training to independent study
- Create Peer to Peer Technology Instruction

Actions added from FFY13 needs assessment

- DBVI will problem solve to make job sites accessible through technology training. Use a team approach for a given situation including customer, job developer, counselor, job site technology evaluation, and training.
- DBVI will increase the number of people who use the training service to make the crossover to Windows 7 and Office 2010 using Tandem and Go-To-Manage as a training tool.
- DBVI will educate customers about Tandem and Go-To-Manage by putting training examples on the website including mp3 recordings and success stories.
- DBVI will assist customers to continuously improve work related technology skills like using the internet, Microsoft Office, M312, and Adobe documents so they can do their job in the most efficient way.
- DBVI will create a system for establishing technology training goals that are adjusted quarterly as necessary.

(p) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals.

Evaluation and Report of Progress

(p) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals. Describe:

(1) An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed

program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

(A) Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.

(B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

(2) An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment program goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent program year were achieved.

The evaluation must:

- (A) Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- (B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.
- (3) The VR program’s performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.
- (4) How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.

Evaluation and Report of Progress

DBVI Goals and Strategies 2013

FFY 2013 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2013 Measures	FFY 2013 Targets
1. Consumer satisfaction with DBVI services will increase. Continue to create a Customer-Centered Culture.	Triennial consumer satisfaction survey.	DBVI will maintain overall consumer satisfaction at or above the 92% level (2011).

Update for goal #1: Statewide random survey conducted by Market Decisions in FFY 2015 showed 95% Overall Satisfaction.

FFY 2013 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2013 Measures	FFY 2013 Targets
2. Consumer earnings will increase beyond the rate of inflation.	RSA Performance Indicator 1.5: DBVI wages compared to state average, and 1.6: own income as primary source of support.	1.5: DBVI consumer wages will increase from 80% in 2010 of state average to 82% of state average in 2013. 1.6: DBVI will increase the difference between percent self-supporting at closure and application from 16% in 2010 to 19% in 2013.

Update Indicator 1.5 for goal #2:

- 2011— 82% of the state average.
- 2012—75% of the state average.
- 2013—79% of the state average.
- 2014—81% of the state average.

2015—79% of the state average.

Update Indicator 1.6 for goal #2:

2011—18% difference between percent self-supporting at closure and application.
 2012—12% difference between percent self-supporting at closure and application.
 2013—18.1% difference between percent self-supporting at closure and application.
 2014—27% difference between percent self-supporting at closure and application.
 2015—31% difference between percent self-supporting at closure and application.

FFY 2013 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2013 Measures	FFY 2013 Targets
3. More customers will be employed.	RSA Performance Indicator 1.2: Percentage of DBVI consumers achieving an employment outcome.	1.2: DBVI consumers achieving an employment outcome will increase from 71% in 2010 to 73% in 2013.
	Increase rehab rate.	DBVI rehab rate will increase from 73% in 2010 to 77% in 2013.

Update Indicator 1.2 for goal #3:

2011—75%
 2012—77%
 2013—80.2%
 2014—79%
 2015—73%

FFY 2013 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2013 Measures	FFY 2013 Targets
4. Serve more transition age students.	Percentage of DBVI caseload.	DBVI will increase the transition age population served from 21% in 2010 to 22% in 2013.

Update for goal #4:

2011—22% of the total population served. This includes 7 out of 353 youth under age 25 at application were served in FFY 2013 (this includes cases in status 02 and above, but not cases open only in post-employment).
 2012—21% of the total population served. This includes 75 out of 363 youth under age 25 at application were served in FFY 2013 (this includes cases in status 02 and above, but not cases open only in post-employment).
 2013—20% of the total population served. This includes 74 out of 375 youth under age 25 at application were served in FFY 2013 (this includes cases in status 02 and above, but not cases open only in post-employment).
 2014—20% of the total population served. This includes 76 youth under age 25 at application served out of 387 individuals served in FFY 2014 (this includes cases in status 02 and above, but not cases open only in post-employment).
 2014— 4% of the total population served. This includes 15 high school students out of 387 individuals served in FFY 2014 (this includes cases in status 02 and above, but not cases open only in post-employment).
 2015—21% of the total population served. This includes 78 youth under age 25 at application served out of 372 individuals served in FFY 2015 (this includes cases in status 02 and above, but not cases open only in post-employment).
 2015— 6% of the total population served. This includes 21 high school students out of 372 individuals served in FFY 2015 (this includes cases in status 02 and above, but not cases open only in post-employment).

FFY 2013 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2013 Measures	FFY 2013 Targets
5. DBVI employees will be satisfied with their jobs.	Results from biennial DAIL/DBVI staff satisfaction survey.	DBVI staff satisfaction will be maintained at (2011 rating) or higher.
6. All DBVI staff will have the skills and competencies to do their jobs.	Feedback from staff on biennial DBVI staff satisfaction survey.	In 2011 90% of staff said they had enough information to do their jobs. This will be maintained at (2011 rating) or higher.
7. Increase capacity to serve un-served or underserved populations; specifically: a. Deaf-Blind b. Minority c. Individuals who are transition age (14-24).	Implementation of services targeted at underserved populations.	Partner with the Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to support training of Support Service Providers in Vermont. Increase the percentage of transition age youth served to 14%.

FFY 2013 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2013 Measures	FFY 2013 Targets
		Increase the number of individuals served who are minorities from 5 in FFY 2011 to 10 in FFY 2013.

Update Deaf-Blind SSP:

2011—DBVI provided a grant to VCDHH to provide training to build the capacity to provide SSP services in Vermont. The VT Coalition for Disability Rights made this a platform item to request state general fund to pay for this service.

2012—0 persons served.

2013—1 person served. The pilot SSP project is on hold because the Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is longer in business and they were going to coordinate the project.

2014—3 persons served.

2015—3 person served.

Update - Number of Transition Age Youth:

2011—See #4 above.

2012—See #4 above.

2013—See #4 above.

2014— See #4 above.

2015— See #4 above.

Update – Number of Minorities Served

2012—the number of individuals served was 4. Ratio of minority service rate to non-minority service rate = .80

2013—the number of individuals served was 6. Ratio of minority service rate to non-minority service rate = .88

2014—the number of individuals served was 8. Ratio of minority service rate to non-minority service rate = 1.20 (all minority clients were served (100%) compared to 84% of non-minorities served.

2015—the number of individuals served was 7. Ratio of minority service rate to non-minority service rate = .83

FFY 2013 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2013 Measures	FFY 2013 Targets
8. DBVI will work in collaboration with Creative Workforce Solutions and the DOL to ensure people who are blind or visually impaired have access to services through	As indicated on the DBVI tracking database (105-R)	By the end of FFY 2013 DBVI will have a total of 8 customers who are served by DBVI and DOL together.

FFY 2013 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2013 Measures	FFY 2013 Targets
progressive employment opportunities and the state workforce investment system.		

Update—Served by DOL:

2012—Two individuals also had services provided by One-Stop.
 2013—Three individuals also had services provided by One-Stop.
 2014—Two individuals also had services provided by One-Stop.
 2015—Three individuals also had services provided by One-Stop.

FFY 2013 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2013 Measures	FFY 2013 Targets
9. DBVI will work to improve the outcomes of community supported employment providers serving individuals with developmental disabilities.	Number of 26 closures achieved through the supported employment programs. Total number of people who are blind or visually impaired and have developmental disabilities employed with supports.	In Federal Fiscal Year 2011 DBVI served or collaborated with General VR for a total of 4 people who were working in supported employment programs. This will increase to 6 by Federal Fiscal Year 2013.

Update – Supported Employment:

2012—Four individuals received supported employment services through a designated agency.
 2013—Four individuals received supported employment services through a designated agency.
 2014—Six individuals received supported employment services through a designated agency.
 2015—Six individuals received supported employment services through a designated agency.

FFY 2013 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2013 Measures	FFY 2013 Targets
10. DBVI will work to improve the outcomes of community providers serving individuals who are	Number of 26 closures achieved with assistance of VABIR and VABVI services.	In Federal Fiscal Year 2011 a total of 50 people received services from VABIR and 20 successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate=40%).

FFY 2013 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2013 Measures	FFY 2013 Targets
blind or visually impaired.	Number of 26 closures achieved with assistance of VABIR and VABVI services.	<p>This will increase to a rehab rate of 50% by Federal Fiscal Year 2013.</p> <p>In State Fiscal Year 2011 a total of 100 people received services from VABVI and 40 successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate=40%).</p> <p>This will increase to a rehab rate of 50% by Federal Fiscal Year 2013.</p>

Update – Closures with VABIR Services

2012—a total of 27 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABIR, and 22 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 81 %).

2013—a total of 26 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABIR, and 22 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 81 %).

2014—a total of 29 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABIR, and 20 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 71 %).

2015—a total of 41 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABIR, and 29 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 71 %).

Update – Closures with VABVI Services:

2012—a total of 52 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABVI, and 40 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 84 %).

2013—a total of 57 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABVI, and 49 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 86%).

2014—a total of 73 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABVI, and 52 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 76 %).

2015—a total of 92 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABVI, and 68 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 75 %).

Evaluation of DBVI Employment Strategies FFY 2015

Strategy 1: DBVI will collaborate with Creative Workforce Solutions to find employment in accordance with the customer's interests and qualifications.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed: 3 and 8

Actions:

- Establish clear goals with VABIR staff to increase the number of Employment Outcomes, Work Experiences, OJT, and Volunteer Opportunities as tracked in the CWS database.
- Expand opportunities in the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program.

Update 2015:

- DBVI has worked closely with VR, DOL, and AOE to create a Unified Plan under WIOA. This will result in expanded employment opportunities and results for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.
- In FFY 2015 the DBVI Director joined the Governor's Committee of Employment of People with Disabilities.

Strategy 2: DBVI will promote employment by educating employers and providing opportunities for increased exposure to people who are blind or visually impaired. This will address "Societies reaction to blindness."

Goal and Priority Area Addressed: 3

Actions:

- Create a video of people working at their job.

Update 2015:

This past year DBVI presented at:

- VABVI PALS groups
- Disability Awareness Day at the Vermont State House
- Central Vermont Job Fair
- Lamoille Valley Job Fair
- Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports (VASS) Four summer events
- Central Vermont Home Health
- Springfield Community Health Team
- Vermont Optometrist Association Convention
- UVM Disability Day (For future Doctors)
- Bellows Falls Optometrist
- Johnson State College
- Vocational Rehabilitation regional offices
- Regional White Cane Awareness Day marches around the State of Vermont
- Rutland Business Recognition Breakfast
- Rutland Chamber of commerce
- Rutland Council on Aging
- Regional Core Transition Team Meetings
- Regional workforce Boards

In addition to the above presentations, DBVI continually sends out information and brochures to local optometrist, ophthalmologist, Regional Area Agencies on Aging, diabetic educators, Elderly living Centers and Colleges and training programs.

- DBVI cosponsored White Cane Awareness Events across the state during the month of October.

Strategy 3: DBVI will create Consumer Driven Events to assist individuals as they prepare for employment.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed: 1, 2, and 3

Actions:

- Create networking events.

Update 2015:

- DBVI held two statewide consumer driven events in the ongoing “Great Expectations” series of workshops. The theme this year was “self-awareness.” The agenda included several peer lead panel discussions about how self-awareness leading to employment.

Strategy 4: DBVI will create opportunities for access to information.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed: 2 and 3

Actions:

- DBVI will continue to expand the information on the website and will work with the SRC for ideas.

Update 2015:

- The newly designed DBVI website will launch early 2016 on a new platform.

Strategy 5: DBVI will address transportation challenges.

Goal and Priority Area Addressed: 3

Actions:

- Participate in system level planning.
- Assist VABVI to increase the number of volunteer drivers—build data base.
- Promote the option for DBVI to pay for the first 60 days of a ride to the job.

Update 2015:

- The pilot with the Vermont Transportation Agency to assess the transportation needs for people who are deaf and blind has been delayed due to the recent closing of the Vermont Association for the Deaf who were planning to host the project.

Strategy 6: DBVI will improve communication with customers regarding expectations for DBVI services.

Goal and Priority Areas Addressed: 1

Actions:

- DBVI will develop a consistent statewide orientation to DBVI services which will be implemented in all four regional offices.

Update 2015:

- DBVI contracted with Market Decisions to conduct a statewide customer satisfaction survey.
- As a follow-up to DBVI's Employment Guide to Services, DBVI is currently developing a pre and post checklist to collect evidence of how people are "Better Off" as a result of working with DBVI. This will be completed by June 2016.

Strategy 7: DBVI will increase communication within DBVI through implementation of videoconferencing in all four regions and central office.

Goal and Priority Areas Addressed: 5 and 6

Actions:

- DBVI will implement videoconferencing technology in all four DBVI district offices and central office. This technology will be used for staff meetings and trainings (complete).

Strategy 8: DBVI will increase capacity to serve underserved populations through the implementation of special projects.

Goal and Priority Area: 7

Actions:

- Create a statewide system to track all visually impaired students as they graduate high school.
- Add 5-hours / week to the job developer position in Burlington to expand outreach efforts.
- Create and support Deaf-Blind SSP project.

Update 2015:

- The pilot with the Vermont Transportation Agency to assess the transportation needs for people who are deaf and blind has been delayed due to the recent closing of the Vermont Association for the Deaf who were planning to host the project.
- DBVI staff had a statewide meeting to coordinate with VR Transition Counselors, and the Teachers of the Visually Impaired to increase the number of transition students served. Create some documents that explain what DBVI can offer.
- The Learn Earn and Prosper (LEAP) employment program for youth has expanded from summer to year-round sessions. Two workshops were held during school vacation to provide direct instructions for Pre-Employment Transition Skills for high school students.

Strategy 9: DBVI will continue to become an administratively efficient organization by finding efficient and user friendly ways to complete paperwork for staff and customers.

Goal and Priority Areas: All

Actions:

- DBVI and DVR will continue efforts to create an automated case management system to be completed in FFY 2013.

Update 2015:

DBVI and VR are in the process of finalizing a contract for a case management system.

Strategy 10: DBVI will systematically recognize exemplary staff performance using an evaluation system based on core competencies and development of SMART goals.

Goal and Priority Areas: 5 & 6

Actions:

- DBVI supervisors will work with each staff member to create SMART goals connected to the DBVI strategic plan.
- DBVI supervisors will work with each staff member to establish development opportunities for the 5 DBVI Core Competencies.
- Each staff will have an Individual Development Plan.

Update 2015:

- Each staff has identified individual development opportunities as they relate to DBVI strategies.

Strategy 11: DBVI will explore outreach strategies to increase applicants and diversify the DBVI caseload.

Goal and Priority Areas: 3 and 7

Actions:

- Each DBVI region will create an outreach plan for the year.

Update 2015:

This past year DBVI presented at:

- VABVI PALS groups
- Disability Awareness Day at the Vermont State House
- Central Vermont Job Fair
- Lamoille Valley Job Fair

- Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports (VASS) Four summer events
- Central Vermont Home Health
- Springfield Community Health Team
- Vermont Optometrist Association Convention
- UVM Disability Day (For future Doctors)
- Bellows Falls Optometrist
- Johnson State College
- Vocational Rehabilitation regional offices
- Regional White Cane Awareness Day marches around the State of Vermont
- Rutland Business Recognition Breakfast
- Rutland Chamber of commerce
- Rutland Council on Aging
- Regional Core Transition Team Meetings
- Regional workforce Boards
- In addition to the above presentations, DBVI continually sends out information and brochures to local optometrist, ophthalmologist, Regional Area Agencies on Aging, diabetic educators, Elderly living Centers and Colleges and training programs.
- UVM Job Fair
- Lions Club
- Johnson State college
- Windsor, White River Junction, Lebanon Optometrist
- Springfield Community Health Team
- Rutland Community Access

Strategy 12: DBVI staff will have the tools to deliver services quickly to DBVI customers.

Goal and Priority Areas: 1

Actions:

- DBVI will explore the use of purchasing laptops for staff to do their job more efficiently.
- DBVI will explore professional development opportunities with the TACE Center.

Update 2015:

DBVI held a Low Vision workshop for staff in May 2015 in White River Jct. The presenter, Darick Wright is a low vision expert from Perkins. The goal is for DBVI staff to have current knowledge about trends in low vision and a solid understanding of environmental factors for different eye conditions.

Strategy 13: DBVI will implement strategies designed to enable DBVI customers to access higher wage employment through short-term training.

Goal and Priority Areas: 1, 2, 3, & 8

Actions:

- Evaluate the impact of progressive employment on outcomes.

Update 2015:

DBVI continues to work closely with VABIR to create progressive employment opportunities.

2012—a total of 27 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABIR, and 22 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 81 %).

2013—a total of 26 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABIR, and 22 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 81 %).

2014—a total of 29 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABIR, and 20 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 71 %).

2015—a total of 41 cases closed where the individual had received services from VABIR, and 29 of these cases successfully achieved a 26 closure (Rehab Rate= 71 %).

Strategy 14: DBVI will implement activities designed to reduce the number of individuals who are closed in a status 28 (not employed).

Goal and Priority Areas: 1, and 3

Actions:

- DBVI will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of status 28 closures to identify any specific trends or issues that DBVI needs to address.

Update 2015:

FFY 2015, the reason closed for cases that had a plan, but closed unsuccessfully (i.e., status 28 closures) were:

Reason Closed	Cases
Unable to locate or contact	17
Disability too significant for VR	2
No Longer Interested In Services	6
Death	8
Transferred to another agency	2
All other reasons	1

Strategy 15: DBVI will partner with the Vermont Department of Labor to provide employment training options for dual DBVI/DOL customers.

Goal and Priority Areas: 3 & 8

Actions:

- DBVI will establish a system for tracking participation of DBVI customers who utilize DOL services and training.
- DBVI will work with CWS local teams and DOL to obtain employment needs of companies and then match DBVI customers with specific training.
- DBVI will invite DOL to a staff meeting to discuss collaboration ideas.

Update 2015:

- DBVI has worked closely with DOL under WIOA to develop our Unified Plan which will lead to more employment and training opportunities for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Strategy 16: DBVI will provide technology training for people who need to prepare for a job or succeed at a current job.

Goal and Priority Areas: 2 & 3**Actions:**

- DBVI will problem solve to make job sites accessible through technology training. Use a team approach for a given situation including customer, job developer, counselor, job site technology evaluation, and training.
- DBVI will increase the number of people who use the training service to make the crossover to Windows 7 and Office 2010 using Tandem and Go-To-Manage as a training tool.
- DBVI will educate customers about Tandem and Go-To-Manage by putting training examples on the website including mp3 recordings and success stories.

DBVI will assist customers to continuously improve work related technology skills like using the internet, Microsoft Office, M312, and Adobe documents so they can do their job in the most efficient way.

Update 2015:

DBVI purchased a curriculum from Apex that includes a module for using screen readers and screen enlargement software with Microsoft products. It includes lesson plans, student practice, and assessments. The materials are being used with several customers and are producing good results.

- DBVI will create a system for establishing technology training goals that are adjusted quarterly as necessary.

Standards and Indicators-

DBVI met 5 of the 6 indicators in Standard 1 and met all 3 of the Primary indicators in FFY 2013. The Indicators not met was 1.6. Indicator 1.1 measures the number of successful closures in a two year period compared to the average for the prior 2 year period. This increased by 20 in FFY 2015 (144 to 164). The history for Homemaker closures is:

FFY 2011=29% (20 of 69)

FFY 2012=20% (14 of 68)

FFY 2013=27% (19 of 70)

FFY 2014=23% (17 of 74)

FFY 2015=33% (30 of 60)

Indicator 1.6 measures 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. This is the same standard missed the prior year. DBVI believes our lower percentage this year is based on two factors. One reason is that many customers are beginning self-employment. Many people have turned to this option due to the tough economic climate and limited number of jobs. The other reason is the high percentage of job saves again this year. DBVI

has a strong commitment to working with customers who are currently employed so that they won't lose their jobs as they experience vision loss.

All other Standards and Indicators were met in FFY 2015. See updates above for details.

Innovation and Expansion:

General Program Information

The Learn, Earn, and Prosper (LEAP) program provides youth, 16-24 years old, who are blind or visually impaired the opportunity to gain the skills needed to become independent, confident, and productive young adults. The goal of this program is to increase the employable skills of youth in transition which will help lead to meaningful employment. The LEAP program is a great balance of learning new skills and enjoying all that Vermont's outdoors has to offer in the summertime — for instance sailing, hiking, and visiting the local Farmer's Market!

In 2015, 17 Corps Members and Interns representing 6 states participated in the LEAP program and over the course of 4-8 weeks they learned how to:

- Cook delicious meals
- Create a budget
- Use a cash register, repair computers and/or serve customers in retail and food service settings
- Take public transportation
- Create lasting friendships
- Kayak on Lake Champlain
- Build a community
- Have FUN!!

In 2016 we will offer four distinct LEAP programs: the LEAP Crew for youth 16-22 and the LEAP Internship for youth 18-24.

LEAP Crew

The LEAP Crew is an intensive residential program where a team of 6-8 Corps Members have a chance to practice living independently under the guidance of two experienced ReSOURCE Crew Leaders. Members learn how to cook meals, shop for groceries, budget money, use public transportation, do laundry, and live as a community -- all while making friends and sharing new experiences!

LEAP Corps Members work at one of two job placements three days a week, work with the Farm at VYCC two days a week and participate in weekly career and college readiness workshops. Weekends are spent as a crew exploring all the Burlington area has to offer: canoeing, hiking, swimming, attending a play, visiting the museum, practicing yoga, taking art classes, etc.

Throughout this whole experience the crew lives in an apartment on the UVM campus where they can practice independent living skills, such as learning to buy groceries, cooking healthy meals, doing laundry and sharing chores around the apartment.

ReSOURCE

One of the job training sites for the LEAP Crew is ReSOURCE. At ReSOURCE, Corps Members receive job training which in turn helps ReSOURCE to continue its mission of teaching individuals in transition valuable job skills and technical training. Many tasks and projects must be completed in order to help ReSOURCE run efficiently and effectively. To learn more visit www.resourcevt.org.

Corps members may receive job training in one or more areas including customer service, working in the home goods store, disassembling computers, small appliance repair, carpentry, and office administration.

Overlook Café

The Overlook Café is a Randolph Sheppard site and serves as the other LEAP Crew training site. At the Overlook Café Corps Members learn job skills including customer service, food preparation, menu pricing, cash register use, and office administration.

The Farm at VYCC

One day a week the LEAP Crew travels to Richmond, VT to work with Farm Crew. The LEAP crew works as a team to weed gardens, harvest and wash vegetables, weigh and pack weekly Health Care Shares and prepare for the Farmer's Market. In 2016, the Farm at VYCC will also be an option for a three day a week work experience, similar to ReSOURCE and the Overlook Café above, for LEAP participants. <http://www.farmatvycc.org/>

Professional Development Fridays

Every Friday LEAP Crew participates in workshops provided by different organizations in Burlington. These workshops cover essential career skills such as interviewing, budgeting, and resume writing, public speaking, planning for college, a personality test, and more.

WoRD - Writing, Reading and Discussion

Built into each day is one hour for the VYCC educational program, WoRD. Using a compilation of articles and essays, crews read aloud about important environmental and social issues that are relevant both locally and nationally. The crew then engages in thoughtful discussion and spends time journaling on the topic. The goal of WoRD is to explore new topics and help participants articulate their thoughts and opinions in a safe environment. WoRD books are available electronically and in large print and Braille.

LEAP Corps Member Job Description

Responsibilities

- Work hard as part of a team
- Participate in all activities, including WoRD, group training exercises, and community activities
- Respect fellow crew members and the natural environment
- Share all cooking and cleaning duties
- Complete safe, high quality work on all projects
- Abide by all VYCC rules and policies

Qualifications

- 16 - 24 years of age
- Strong desire to join ReSOURCE and work with others
- Ability to follow directions and independently complete tasks
- Willingness to learn, receive feedback, and work hard

LEAP Internship Program

The LEAP Internship Program is built upon the foundation of the LEAP Crew. Youth will have the opportunity to continue building their transferable job skills and independent living skills in a supportive environment. Four interns will work and live in Burlington under the guidance of a trained Crew Leader. Each intern will have an independent work site and will take public transportation to and from work to further prepare for competitive employment. Staff will work with interns on an individual basis throughout the application process to find a worksite that meets their work goals.

Nights and weekends in the LEAP Internship Program will be spent as a group with interns having the opportunity to explore Burlington and continue developing their independent living skills. Interns will take yoga, attend a play, visit museums, try rock climbing, visit the Farmer's Market and explore the city. Interns help support each other through these new experiences and they will be able to meet with the LEAP Corps Members for weekly potluck dinners to share about their experiences and build a larger community.

Throughout the internship, participants will be encouraged to progressively take on more independent tasks at the worksite and to take on more responsibility for aspects of community living such as meal planning, grocery shopping, community involvement, planning weekend activities and organizing chore charts.

Internship sites in the past two years have included the Sara Holbrook Community Center, King St. Youth, the Farm at VYCC, VT Fresh Foods, The Flynn Theatre, Small Dog Electronics, the Courthouse Café, Maple Wind Farm, ReSOURCE, South Burlington Parks and Recreation, and more.

Intern Job Description

Responsibilities

- Work hard as part of a team
- Participate in all VYCC activities, including WoRD, group training exercises, and community activities
- Respect fellow Interns and the natural environment
- Share all cooking and cleaning duties
- Complete high quality work
- Abide by all VYCC rules and policies
- Abide by all worksite specific policies

Qualifications

- 18 - 24 years of age
- Strong desire to join the VYCC and work with others
- Ability to work independently with minimal direct supervision
- Ability to follow directions and independently complete tasks
- Willingness to learn, receive feedback, and work hard

Professional Growth Workshops

This program will focus on developing students' professional skills so that they are more prepared to enter the workforce when they graduate. During the school year, students meet to learn professional skills which will allow them to be successful in their vocation. Workshops have focused on workplace relationships, networking and developing resources, and learning how to interview. We intend to plan and facilitate workshops in the future which will teach workplace assistive technology, financing emotional intelligence, and more.

In 2016, LEAP will execute 3 Professional Growth Workshops working with a total of 24 youth who are blind and visually impaired. We will provide reports to DBVI counselors to track student progress, give observations and make recommendations. We will also follow up with students before and after workshops to be sure they are working on their career goals.

Mentoring Program

LEAP will launch an exciting new leadership development program in 2016 which develops and structures meaningful mentorship between youth and adults who are blind and visually impaired. The program will create curriculum (guided by the Expanded Core Curriculum) for leaders and their mentees to follow in order to create success. Adults successful in the workplace will be paired with transitional aged youth to help guide them towards their career goals.

Quotes from Crew Members

“Before I joined LEAP I sat around over the summer. I had nothing to do. But since joining I have had a fun filled summer and get to meet new people. Since I've been here we have done a lot including work on the farm. I've done farming before but not on that large of a scale. If I didn't join the LEAP Crew I wouldn't be active. I would be sitting on my couch watching T.V. LEAP changed that because now I'm out working and having fun and making new friends.”

“Before LEAP, I was lacking teambuilding skills. I was always a loner in a group. I have been getting better at that. I never worked at a store before and now I am getting some experience. Since I came here I have been learning so much. I used to not like being in groups. I liked working at ReSOURCE and on the Farm at VYCC. I am having a very prosperous summer.”

“Best overall Moment...Definitely this last week. We had some turbulence but we all became friends on some level. Isn't that what LEAP is all about? All these different people living together for a month and making it work. Now that is an accomplishment!

Results-Based Accountability

Performance Measures

Employment Rate: The percentage of people served by DBVI who have achieved an employment outcome successfully attained vocational goal for a minimum of 90 days.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	National Standard
Employment Rate	71%	75%	77%	80%	79%	73%	67.11%

Earnings Compared to State Average: Average hourly earnings of people who exit DBVI as a percentage of state earnings average.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	National Standard
% of earning compared to state average	82%	75%	79%	81%	79%	59%

Customer Satisfaction:

	2003 Market Decisions Survey (Formal)	2011 Market Decisions Survey (Formal)	2013 Closure Survey (Ongoing Informal)	2014 Closure Survey (Ongoing Informal)	2015 Market Decisions Survey (Formal)
Overall Satisfaction with services received	93%	92%			95%
Services provided met expectations	93%	90%			85%
Staff were helpful to achieve vocational goals	98%	95%			96%
DBVI delivered services well for me			92%	91%	89%
I did get the results I wanted from DBVI			93%	89%	94%

Story Behind the Curve

DBVI's primary indicators show a strong rehabilitation rate for people who are blind or visually impaired. While these results are above the national average in all areas, DBVI's objective is to help all customers reach their employment goals. For this reason, DBVI's SFY2015 research agenda includes an analysis to determine why some individuals did not obtain employment.

DBVI also expects to help individuals get the best paying job possible. We realize that many individuals decide to develop their own small business, which meets their lifestyle needs, but may not have a strong income return in the beginning. Our research agenda also includes a look at what types of professions individuals are choosing and the incomes they are earning.

Vision loss causes a sharp initial decrease in independence and ability to do regular tasks previously done with normal vision. The DBVI program provides the opportunity for people to learn new adaptive skills to overcome functional limitations due to vision loss; the process may take months or years. Informal closure surveys show the top two services that help ‘turn the curve’ in building skills are Low Vision and Assistive Technology equipment and instruction. After individuals learn skills and use adaptive equipment, they can resume many activities and function more independently in the community and at work. Over 90% of DBVI customers surveyed at closure identified their attainment of new adaptive skills as the most important factor in their success. Customers share many examples of how their new skills have helped them adapt to vision loss, maintain employment, and improve their quality of life. They are better off because they can now:

- Obtain their employment goals.
- Access printed material with the use of assistive technology.
- Travel independently on the job and in the community with the use of the white cane.
- Use special magnification and lighting to access information on the job and at home.

Quotes include:

- “The best thing that happened to me while working with DBVI was that I got a CCTV to help me with my written material that I need to access for my job. I also learned how to use magnifiers as well.”
- “I learned how to use a laptop and screen magnification to help me access information I need. It is great to have this new skill for my job. “
- “Without the DBVI assistance with surgery I would have lost my vision and my job.”
- “I learned to use assistive technology that allowed me the freedom to continue to run my business.”
- “I learned how to adapt and adjust to being a newly blind person. I can’t begin to tell you how valuable this experience was for me.”

Results of a statewide random survey (conducted by Market Decisions) of all DBVI customers in 2015 indicated:

- 95%--Overall, percentage of customers satisfied with the DBVI program.
- 95%--Customers satisfied with the services they received.
- 96%--Customers indicated that the staff were very or somewhat helpful in helping them to achieve their vocational rehabilitation goals.
- 94%--Customers indicated that the services they received helped them become more generally **“Independent.”**
- 94%--Customers agreed that they were **“Better Off,”** overall, as a result of the services they received from DBVI.

Partners

DBVI considers the people we serve as partners. This year we conducted Town Meeting events in each of our 4 regions. The goal was to hear the “Voice of the Customer” about the results they expect from our program. We also work closely with the State Rehabilitation Council, appointed by the Governor. The SRC partners with DBVI to evaluate data and to develop goals and strategies.

DBVI is encouraged that our partnership with the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired is helping customers to build the adaptive skills they need on the job and in the community. We are also encouraged

that progressive employment strategies and our partnership with the Vermont Association for Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation (VABIR) is helping DBVI to partner effectively with businesses to provide opportunities for blind or visually impaired workers to demonstrate their abilities in the workplace.

The DBVI partnership with ReSource and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps is helping students and young adults build the skills they need in the workplace. VYCC helps DBVI run a summer youth employment program that provides the opportunity for students to learn employment skills and Independent Living Skills. These early employment experiences help build the confidence needed to succeed in college, in vocational training, and in the workplace.

What Works

DBVI's customer satisfaction is a strength. These ratings consistently exceed 90% each year. Staff are described as responsive, easy to reach, and helping people meet their goals. Comments at each of the 4 Town Meetings acknowledged that DBVI staff and services "gave them hope."

Individuals who experience vision loss need to learn new adaptive skills, and DBVI strategies are designed to help people build these skills. In most situations, assistive technology is the key to opening the door for employment. Specialized software and hardware are often needed to access print, and specialized skills (including the use of specialized magnification and lighting) are needed to use the technology successfully. The combination of technology and the skills to use the technology helps individuals return to their jobs and community activities.

Our customers have used work experiences as a way to show employers that they can do the job. Many employers cannot conceive of how a blind person can do a particular job, until they learn that some simple low cost accommodations make it possible. This is also a great opportunity for people to build employment skills and to learn about jobs they like or don't like.

DBVI also makes a strong commitment to help individuals succeed in post-secondary and vocational training programs. These degrees and certificates usually lead to better paying jobs.

For students, DBVI's process involves strong communication with a team including the student, families, school staff, and Teachers of the Visually Impaired. Each DBVI counselor guides students and teams to develop specific action steps depending on the path they will take toward either more training or directly into work. Our role is to help students make a smooth individual transition into the world of work.

Action Plan

DBVI staff and the State Rehabilitation Council have reviewed the 2014 Town Meeting results, the 2015 statewide customer satisfaction survey, and other performance data and have revised goals and strategies that were approved by the SRC in December 2015.

Our research agenda continues to include a close look at data about customers who did not achieve employment in FFY 2015. Staff will be investigating what new strategies might be needed for those who were not successful. This may include strategies to educate employers about the skills these individuals can bring to the workplace. It also may involve finding new strategies to help individuals build the specific skills that are needed by employers.

DBVI has a commitment to customer-centered culture that continues to guide staff in making continuous improvements: listening to the voice of our customers, using this information along with performance measures

to improve our current products and develop new ones. The new plan with updated goals and strategies was completed and approved by the SRC in December 2015.

(q) Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services.

Include the following:

- (1) The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.
- (2) The timing of transition to extended services.

As part of a Memorandum of Understanding DBVI has access to the General Vocational Rehabilitation Services described below.

General VR Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

DVR works closely with the Developmental Disabilities Services Division (DDSD) to provide supported employment services and DVR funds are viewed, along with Medicaid funds, as an integral part of the overall employment budget for individuals with developmental disabilities. This funding braids DVR funding with individual Medicaid Waiver funds to create a seamless structure of upfront and ongoing support. DVR funds are specifically allocated to provide assessment, training, and placement services until closure, with Medicaid Waiver funds providing the necessary long-term follow-up.

DVR and DDSD only support individual integrated competitive supported employment. The State does not support any sheltered work or congregate work settings. The most recent employment rate data for individuals with developmental disabilities (SFY14) showed a 47% employment rate for working age adults in the DDSD system. Employment placements that resulted in a VR employment outcome were up in State Fiscal Year 2015 to 245 individuals from 223 the prior year.

DVR and DDSD have no supported employment workshops since Vermont closed its last workshop for individuals with developmental disabilities in 2002. That same year, Vermont was ranked #1 in the nation in the number of people with developmental disabilities who received supported employment to work per 100,000 of the state population.¹ In the past two years, the numbers of individuals with developmental disabilities employed in competitive jobs have continued to increase.