

State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission State Plan for Fiscal Year 2014 (submitted FY 2013)

Preprint - Section 1: State Certifications

1.1 The **Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission** is authorized to submit this State Plan under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended [1] and its supplement under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act [2].

1.2 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, the **Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission** [3] agrees to operate and administer the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program in accordance with the provisions of this State Plan [4], the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations [5], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and the administration of the State Plan for the vocational rehabilitation services program.

1.3 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated state agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the provisions of the supplement to this State Plan [6], the Rehabilitation Act and all applicable regulations [7], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the Title I State Plan. Yes

1.4 The designated state agency and/or the designated state unit has the authority under state law to perform the functions of the state regarding this State Plan and its supplement. Yes

1.5 The state legally may carry out each provision of the State Plan and its supplement. Yes

1.6 All provisions of the State Plan and its supplement are consistent with state law. Yes

1.7 The (enter title of state officer below) Yes

The Commissioner of Rehabilitation

... has the authority under state law to receive, hold and disburse federal funds made available under this State Plan and its supplement.

1.8 The (enter title of state officer below)...Yes

The Commissioner of Rehabilitation

... has the authority to submit this State Plan for vocational rehabilitation services and the State Plan supplement for supported employment services.

1.9 The agency that submits this State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement. Yes

State Plan Certified By

As the authorized signatory identified above, I hereby certify that I will sign, date and retain in the files of the designated state agency/designated state unit Section 1 of the Preprint, and separate Certification of Lobbying forms (Form ED-80-0013; available at <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/ed80-013.pdf>) for both the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

Signed?Yes

Name of SignatoryCharles Carr

Title of SignatoryThe Commissioner of Rehabilitation

Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy)07/01/2013

Assurances Certified By

At the request of RSA, the designated state agency and/or the designated state unit provide the following assurance(s), in addition to those contained within Section 2 through 8 below, in connection with the approval of the State Plan for FY 2014Yes

Comments:

paper copies with signatures will be mailed

Signed?Yes

Name of SignatoryCharles Carr

Title of SignatoryThe Commissioner of Rehabilitation

Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy)07/01/2013

* The signatory of the assurance with the authority to execute and submit the State Plan will maintain a signed copy of the assurance(s) with the signed State Plan.

Section 1 Footnotes

[1] Public Law 93 112, as amended by Public Laws 93 516, 95 602, 98 221, 99 506, 100-630, 102-569, 103-073, and 105-220.

[2] Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

[3] All references in this plan to "designated state agency" or to "the state agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[4] No funds under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved State Plan in accordance with Section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR part 361.

[5] Applicable regulations include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85 and 86 and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program regulations in 34 CFR Part 361.

[6] No funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the Title I State Plan in accordance with Section 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[7] Applicable regulations include the EDGAR citations in footnote 5, 34 CFR Part 361, and 34 CFR Part 363.

Preprint - Section 2: Public Comment on State Plan Policies and Procedures

2.1 Public participation requirements. (Section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.10(d), .20(a), (b), (d); and 363.11(g)(9))

(a) Conduct of public meetings.

The designated state agency, prior to the adoption of any substantive policies or procedures governing the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the State Plan and supported employment services under the supplement to the State Plan, including making any substantive amendments to the policies and procedures, conducts public meetings throughout the state to provide the public, including individuals with disabilities, an opportunity to comment on the policies or procedures.

(b) Notice requirements.

The designated state agency, prior to conducting the public meetings, provides appropriate and sufficient notice throughout the state of the meetings in accordance with state law governing public meetings or, in the absence of state law governing public meetings, procedures developed by the state agency in consultation with the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council.

(c) Special consultation requirements.

The state agency actively consults with the director of the Client Assistance Program, the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council and, as appropriate, Indian tribes, tribal organizations and native Hawaiian organizations on its policies and procedures governing the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the State Plan and supported employment services under the supplement to the State Plan.

Preprint - Section 3: Submission of the State Plan and its Supplement

3.1 Submission and revisions of the State Plan and its supplement. (Sections 101(a)(1), (23) and 625(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act; Section 501 of the Workforce Investment Act; 34 CFR 76.140; 361.10(e), (f), and (g); and 363.10)

(a) The state submits to the commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration the State Plan and its supplement on the same date that the state submits either a State Plan under Section 112 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 or a state unified plan under Section 501 of that Rehabilitation Act.

(b) The state submits only those policies, procedures or descriptions required under this State Plan and its supplement that have not been previously submitted to and approved by the commissioner.

(c) The state submits to the commissioner, at such time and in such manner as the commissioner determines to be appropriate, reports containing annual updates of the information relating to the:

1. comprehensive system of personnel development;
2. assessments, estimates, goals and priorities, and reports of progress;
3. innovation and expansion activities; and
4. other updates of information required under Title I, Part B, or Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act that are requested by the commissioner.

(d) The State Plan and its supplement are in effect subject to the submission of modifications the state determines to be necessary or the commissioner requires based on a change in state policy, a change in federal law, including regulations, an interpretation of the Rehabilitation Act by a federal court or the highest court of the state, or a finding by the commissioner of state noncompliance with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361 or 34 CFR 363.

3.2 Supported Employment State Plan supplement. (Sections 101(a)(22) and 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.34 and 363.10)

(a) The state has an acceptable plan for carrying out Part B, of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act that provides for the use of funds under that part to supplement funds made available under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the cost of services leading to supported employment.

(b) The Supported Employment State Plan, including any needed annual revisions, is submitted as a supplement to the State Plan.

Preprint - Section 4: Administration of the State Plan

4.1 Designated state agency and designated state unit. (Section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.13(a) and (b))

(a) Designated state agency.

1. There is a state agency designated as the sole state agency to administer the State Plan or to supervise its administration in a political subdivision of the state by a sole local agency.
2. The designated state agency is a state agency that is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities. (Option B was not selected/Option A was selected)
3. In American Samoa, the designated state agency is the governor.

(b) Designated state unit.

1. If the designated state agency is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(B) of this section, the state agency includes a vocational rehabilitation bureau, division or unit that:
 - A. is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and is responsible for the administration of the designated state agency's vocational rehabilitation program under the State Plan;
 - B. has a full-time director;
 - C. has a staff, at least 90 percent of whom are employed full-time on the rehabilitation work of the organizational unit; and
 - D. is located at an organizational level and has an organizational status within the designated state agency comparable to that of other major organizational units of the designated state agency.
2. The name of the designated state vocational rehabilitation unit is

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

4.2 State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council. (Sections 101(a)(21) and 105 of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.16 and .17)

The State Plan must contain one of the following assurances.

(a) The designated state agency is an independent state commission. (Option A was not selected/Option B was selected)

(b) The state has established a State Rehabilitation Council that meets the criteria set forth in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.17 and the designated state unit.

1. jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council develops, agrees to and reviews annually state goals and priorities and jointly submits to the commissioner annual reports of progress in accordance with the provisions of Section 101(a)(15) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.29 and subsection 4.11 of this State Plan;
2. regularly consults with the State Rehabilitation Council regarding the development, implementation and revision of state policies and procedures of general applicability pertaining to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services;
3. includes in the State Plan and in any revision to the State Plan a summary of input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including recommendations from the annual report of the council described in Section 105(c)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(5), the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction described in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4), and other reports prepared by the council and the response of the designated state unit to the input and recommendations, including explanations for rejecting any input or recommendation; and
4. transmits to the council:
 - A. all plans, reports and other information required under 34 CFR 361 to be submitted to the commissioner;
 - B. all policies and information on all practices and procedures of general applicability provided to or used by rehabilitation personnel in carrying out this State Plan and its supplement; and
 - C. copies of due process hearing decisions issued under 34 CFR 361.57, which are transmitted in such a manner as to ensure that the identity of the participants in the hearings is kept confidential.

(c) If the designated state unit has a State Rehabilitation Council, Attachment 4.2(c) provides a summary of the input provided by the council consistent with the provisions identified in subparagraph (b)(3) of this section; the response of the designated state unit to the input and recommendations; and, explanations for the rejection of any input or any recommendation.

4.3 Consultations regarding the administration of the State Plan. (Section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.21)

The designated state agency takes into account, in connection with matters of general policy arising in the administration of the plan and its supplement, the views of:

(a) individuals and groups of individuals who are recipients of vocational rehabilitation services or, as appropriate, the individuals' representatives;

(b) personnel working in programs that provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;

(c) providers of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;

(d) the director of the Client Assistance Program; and

(e) the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.

4.4 Nonfederal share. (Sections 7(14) and 101(a)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 80.24 and 361.60)

The nonfederal share of the cost of carrying out this State Plan is 21.3 percent and is provided through the financial participation by the state or, if the state elects, by the state and local agencies.

4.5 Local administration. (Sections 7(24) and 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.5(b)(47) and .15)

The State Plan provides for the administration of the plan by a local agency. No

If "Yes", the designated state agency:

(a) ensures that each local agency is under the supervision of the designated state unit with the sole local agency, as that term is defined in Section 7(24) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.5(b)(47), responsible for the administration of the vocational rehabilitation program within the political subdivision that it serves; and

(b) develops methods that each local agency will use to administer the vocational rehabilitation program in accordance with the State Plan.

4.6 Shared funding and administration of joint programs. (Section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.27)

The State Plan provides for the state agency to share funding and administrative responsibility with another state agency or local public agency to carry out a joint program to provide services to individuals with disabilities. No

If "Yes", the designated state agency submits to the commissioner for approval a plan that describes its shared funding and administrative arrangement. The plan must include:

(a) a description of the nature and scope of the joint program;

(b) the services to be provided under the joint program;

(c) the respective roles of each participating agency in the administration and provision of services; and

(d) the share of the costs to be assumed by each agency.

4.7 Statewideness and waivers of statewideness. (Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.25, .26, and .60(b)(3)(i) and (ii))

This agency is **not** requesting a waiver of statewideness.

(a) Services provided under the State Plan are available in all political subdivisions of the state.

(b) The state unit may provide services in one or more political subdivisions of the state that increase services or expand the scope of services that are available statewide under this State Plan if the:

1. nonfederal share of the cost of these services is met from funds provided by a local public agency, including funds contributed to a local public agency by a private agency, organization or individual;
2. services are likely to promote the vocational rehabilitation of substantially larger numbers of individuals with disabilities or of individuals with disabilities with particular types of impairments; and
3. state, for purposes other than the establishment of a community rehabilitation program or the construction of a particular facility for community rehabilitation program purposes, requests in Attachment 4.7(b)(3) a waiver of the statewideness requirement in accordance with the following requirements:
 - A. identification of the types of services to be provided;
 - B. written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the state unit the nonfederal share of funds;
 - C. written assurance that state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect; and
 - D. written assurance that all other State Plan requirements, including a state's order of selection, will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

(c) Contributions, consistent with the requirements of 34 CFR 361.60(b)(3)(ii), by private entities of earmarked funds for particular geographic areas within the state may be used as part of the nonfederal share without the state requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement provided that the state notifies the commissioner that it cannot provide the full nonfederal share without using the earmarked funds.

4.8 Cooperation, collaboration and coordination. (Sections 101(a)(11), (24)(B), and 625(b)(4) and (5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.22, .23, .24, and .31, and 363.11(e))

(a) Cooperative agreements with other components of statewide work force investment system.

The designated state agency or the designated state unit has cooperative agreements with other entities that are components of the statewide work force investment system and replicates those agreements at the local level between individual offices of the designated state unit and local entities carrying out the One-Stop service delivery system or other activities through the statewide work force investment system.

(b) Cooperation and coordination with other agencies and entities.

Attachment 4.8(b) (1)-(4) describes the designated state agency's:

1. cooperation with and use of the services and facilities of the federal, state, and local agencies and programs, including programs carried out by the undersecretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture and state use contracting programs, to the extent that those agencies and programs are not carrying out activities through the statewide work force investment system;
2. coordination, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 4.8(c) of this section, with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services;
3. establishment of cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.10(b) of the State Plan; and,
4. efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and entities with respect to the provision of supported employment and extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with the requirements of subsection 6.5 of the supplement to this State Plan.

(c) Coordination with education officials.

1. Attachment 4.8(b)(2) describes the plans, policies and procedures for coordination between the designated state agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students who are individuals with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under the responsibility of the designated state agency.
2. The State Plan description must:
 - A. provide for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with 34 CFR 361.45 as early as possible during the transition planning process but, at the latest, before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting; and
 - B. include information on a formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency that, at a minimum, provides for:
 - i. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to postschool activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;

- ii. transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and the educational agency for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- iii. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and
- iv. procedures for outreach to students with disabilities as early as possible during the transition planning process and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

(d) Coordination with statewide independent living council and independent living centers.

The designated state unit, the Statewide Independent Living Council established under Section 705 of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364, and the independent living centers described in Part C of Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 366 have developed working relationships and coordinate their activities.

(e) Cooperative agreement with recipients of grants for services to American Indians.

- 1. There is in the state a recipient(s) of a grant under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing on or near federal and state reservations. **No**
- 2. If "Yes", the designated state agency has entered into a formal cooperative agreement that meets the following requirements with each grant recipient in the state that receives funds under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act:
 - A. strategies for interagency referral and information sharing that will assist in eligibility determinations and the development of individualized plans for employment;
 - B. procedures for ensuring that American Indians who are individuals with disabilities and are living near a reservation or tribal service area are provided vocational rehabilitation services; and
 - C. provisions for sharing resources in cooperative studies and assessments, joint training activities, and other collaborative activities designed to improve the provision of services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities.

4.9 Methods of administration. (Section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.12, .19 and .51(a) and (b))

(a) In general.

The state agency employs methods of administration, including procedures to ensure accurate data collection and financial accountability, found by the commissioner to be necessary for the proper and efficient administration of the plan and for carrying out all the functions for which the state is responsible under the plan and 34 CFR 361.

(b) Employment of individuals with disabilities.

The designated state agency and entities carrying out community rehabilitation programs in the state, who are in receipt of assistance under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and this State Plan, take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities covered under and on the same terms and conditions as set forth in Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act.

(c) Facilities.

Any facility used in connection with the delivery of services assisted under this State Plan meets program accessibility requirements consistent with the provisions, as applicable, of the Architectural Barriers Rehabilitation Act of 1968, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the regulations implementing these laws.

4.10 Comprehensive system of personnel development. (Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.18)

Attachment 4.10 describes 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. The description includes the following:

(a) Data system on personnel and personnel development.

Development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs and personnel development with respect to:

1. Qualified personnel needs.
 - A. The number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
 - B. The number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
 - C. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in five 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.

2. Personnel development.

- A. A list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;
- B. The number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- C. 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.

(b) Plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel.

Development, updating on an annual basis, and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel based on the data collection and analysis system described in paragraph (a) of this subsection and that provides for 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 in accordance with paragraph (c) of this subsection, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

(c) Personnel standards.

Policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained, including:

- 1. standards that are consistent with any national- or state-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services.
- 2. To the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the state plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, the institutions of higher education identified in subparagraph (a)(2), and other public agencies of these steps and the time lines for taking each step.
- 3. The written plan required by subparagraph (c)(2) describes the following:
 - A. specific strategies for retraining, recruiting and hiring personnel;

- B. the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards required by subparagraph (c)(1);
- C. procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period; and
- D. the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards and the identification of a plan for training such individuals to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

(d) Staff development.

Policies, procedures and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated state unit receive appropriate and adequate training. The narrative describes the following:

1. 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.
2. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

(e) Personnel to address individual communication needs.

Availability of personnel within the designated state unit or obtaining 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.

(f) Coordination of personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

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.

4.11. Statewide assessment; annual estimates; annual state goals and priorities; strategies; and progress reports.

(Sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2) and 625(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.17(h)(2), .29, and 363.11(b))

(a) Comprehensive statewide assessment.

1. Attachment 4.11(a) documents the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, jointly conducted every three years by the designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council (if the state has such a council). The assessment describes:
 - A. the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:
 - i. individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
 - ii. individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under this State Plan; and
 - iii. individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide work force investment system.
 - B. The need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.
2. For any year in which the state updates the assessments, the designated state unit submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding updates to the assessments.

(b) Annual estimates.

Attachment 4.11(b) identifies on an annual basis state estimates of the:

1. number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services under the plan;
2. number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds provided under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and under Part B of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection in accordance with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of this State Plan, estimates of the number of individuals to be served under each priority category within the order; and
3. costs of the services described in subparagraph (b)(1), including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection, the service costs for each priority category within the order.

(c) Goals and priorities.

1. Attachment 4.11(c)(1) identifies the goals and priorities of the state that are jointly developed or revised, as applicable, with and agreed to by the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council, in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

2. The designated state agency submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding any revisions in the goals and priorities for any year the state revises the goals and priorities.
3. Order of selection.
If the state agency implements an order of selection, consistent with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of the State Plan, Attachment 4.11(c)(3):
 - A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
 - B. provides a justification for the order; and
 - C. identifies the service and outcome goals, and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
4. Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds.
Attachment 4.11(c)(4) specifies, consistent with subsection 6.4 of the State Plan supplement, the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

(d) Strategies.

1. Attachment 4.11(d) describes the strategies, including:
 - A. the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities, including how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to those individuals at each stage of the rehabilitation process and how those services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis;
 - B. outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities in accordance with subsection 6.6 of the State Plan supplement, and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
 - C. as applicable, the plan of the state for establishing, developing or improving community rehabilitation programs;
 - D. strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
 - E. strategies for assisting other components of the statewide work force investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

2. Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the designated state agency uses these strategies to:
 - A. address the needs identified in the assessment conducted under paragraph 4.11(a) and achieve the goals and priorities identified in the State Plan attachments under paragraph 4.11(c);
 - B. support the innovation and expansion activities identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) of the plan; and
 - C. overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Supported Employment Services Program.

(e) Evaluation and reports of progress.

1. The designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state unit has a council, jointly submits to the commissioner an annual report on the results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and the progress made in improving the effectiveness of the program from the previous year.
2. Attachment 4.11(e)(2):
 - A. provides an evaluation of the extent to which the goals identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3) were achieved;
 - B. identifies the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals and priorities;
 - C. describes the factors that impeded their achievement, to the extent they were not achieved;
 - D. assesses the performance of the state on the standards and indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
 - E. provides a report consistent with paragraph 4.12(c) of the plan on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were utilized in the preceding year.

4.12 Innovation and expansion. (Section 101(a)(18) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.35)

(a) The designated state agency reserves and uses a portion of the funds allotted to the state under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the:

1. development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this State Plan, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment identified in Attachment 4.11(a) and goals and

priorities of the state identified in Attachments 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3); and

2. support of the funding for the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 105(d)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(i), and the funding of the Statewide Independent Living Council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 705(e)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364.21(i).

(b) Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the reserved funds identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) will be utilized.

(c) Attachment 4.11(e)(2) describes how the reserved funds were utilized in the preceding year.

4.13 Reports. (Section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.40)

(a) The designated state unit submits reports in the form and level of detail and at the time required by the commissioner regarding applicants for and eligible individuals receiving services under the State Plan.

(b) Information submitted in the reports provides a complete count, unless sampling techniques are used, of the applicants and eligible individuals in a manner that permits the greatest possible cross-classification of data and protects the confidentiality of the identity of each individual.

Preprint - Section 5: Administration of the Provision of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

5.1 Information and referral services. (Sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.37)

The designated state agency has implemented an information and referral system that is adequate to ensure that individuals with disabilities, including individuals who do not meet the agency's order of selection criteria for receiving vocational rehabilitation services if the agency is operating on an order of selection, are provided accurate vocational rehabilitation information and guidance, including counseling and referral for job placement, using appropriate modes of communication, to assist such individuals in preparing for, securing, retaining or regaining employment, and are referred to other appropriate federal and state programs, including other components of the statewide work force investment system in the state.

5.2 Residency. (Section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.42(c)(1))

The designated state unit imposes no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the state.

5.3 Ability to serve all eligible individuals; order of selection for services. (Sections 12(d) and 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.36)

(a) The designated state unit is able to provide the full range of services listed in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the state who apply for services. Yes

(b) If No:

1. Individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with criteria established by the state, are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services before other individuals with disabilities.
2. Attachment 4.11(c)(3):
 - A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
 - B. provides a justification for the order of selection; and
 - C. identifies the state's service and outcome goals and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
3. Eligible individuals who do not meet the order of selection criteria have access to the services provided through the designated state unit's information and referral system

established under Section 101(a)(20) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.37, and subsection 5.1 of this State Plan.

5.4 Availability of comparable services and benefits. (Sections 101(a)(8) and 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.53)

(a) Prior to providing any vocational rehabilitation services, except those services identified in paragraph (b), to an eligible individual or to members of the individual's family, the state unit determines whether comparable services and benefits exist under any other program and whether those services and benefits are available to the individual.

(b) The following services are exempt from a determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits:

1. assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;
2. counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act;
3. referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide work force investment system, through agreements developed under Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act, if such services are not available under this State Plan;
4. job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;
5. rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids and devices; and
6. post-employment services consisting of the services listed under subparagraphs (1) through (5) of this paragraph.

(c) The requirements of paragraph (a) of this section do not apply if the determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits under any other program would interrupt or delay:

1. progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment;
2. an immediate job placement; or
3. provision of vocational rehabilitation services to any individual who is determined to be at extreme medical risk, based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate qualified medical professional.

(d) The governor in consultation with the designated state vocational rehabilitation agency and other appropriate agencies ensures that an interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination that meets the requirements of Section 101(a)(8)(B)(i)-(iv) of the Rehabilitation Act takes effect between the designated state unit and any appropriate public entity, including the state Medicaid program, a public institution of higher education, and a component of the statewide work force investment system to ensure the provision of the vocational rehabilitation services identified in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, other than the services identified in paragraph (b) of this section, that are included in the individualized plan for employment of an eligible individual, including the provision of those vocational rehabilitation services during the pendency of any dispute that may arise in the implementation of the interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination.

5.5 Individualized plan for employment. (Section 101(a)(9) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.45 and .46)

(a) An individualized plan for employment meeting the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.45 and .46 is developed and implemented in a timely manner for each individual determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, except if the state has implemented an order of selection, and is developed and implemented for each individual to whom the designated state unit is able to provide vocational rehabilitation services.

(b) Services to an eligible individual are provided in accordance with the provisions of the individualized plan for employment.

5.6 Opportunity to make informed choices regarding the selection of services and providers. (Sections 101(a)(19) and 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.52)

Applicants and eligible individuals or, as appropriate, their representatives are provided information and support services to assist in exercising informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process, consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.52.

5.7 Services to American Indians. (Section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.30)

The designated state unit provides vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the state to the same extent as the designated state agency provides such services to other significant populations of individuals with disabilities residing in the state.

5.8 Annual review of individuals in extended employment or other employment under special certificate provisions of the fair labor standards act of 1938. (Section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.55)

(a) The designated state unit conducts an annual review and reevaluation of the status of each individual with a disability served under this State Plan:

1. who has achieved an employment outcome in which the individual is compensated in accordance with Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (29 U.S.C. 214(c)); or

2. whose record of services is closed while the individual is in extended employment on the basis that the individual is unable to achieve an employment outcome in an integrated setting or that the individual made an informed choice to remain in extended employment.

(b) The designated state unit carries out the annual review and reevaluation for two years after the individual's record of services is closed (and thereafter if requested by the individual or, if appropriate, the individual's representative) to determine the interests, priorities and needs of the individual with respect to competitive employment or training for competitive employment.

(c) The designated state unit makes maximum efforts, including the identification and provision of vocational rehabilitation services, reasonable accommodations and other necessary support services, to assist the individuals described in paragraph (a) in engaging in competitive employment.

(d) The individual with a disability or, if appropriate, the individual's representative has input into the review and reevaluation and, through signed acknowledgement, attests that the review and reevaluation have been conducted.

5.9 Use of Title I funds for construction of facilities. (Sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.49(a)(1), .61 and .62(b))

If the state elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs, the following requirements are met:

(a) The federal share of the cost of construction for facilities for a fiscal year does not exceed an amount equal to 10 percent of the state's allotment under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for that fiscal year.

(b) The provisions of Section 306 of the Rehabilitation Act that were in effect prior to the enactment of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 apply to such construction.

(c) There is compliance with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.62(b) that ensure the use of the construction authority will not reduce the efforts of the designated state agency in providing other vocational rehabilitation services other than the establishment of facilities for community rehabilitation programs.

5.10 Contracts and cooperative agreements. (Section 101(a)(24) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.31 and .32)

(a) Contracts with for-profit organizations.

The designated state agency has the authority to enter into contracts with for-profit organizations for the purpose of providing, as vocational rehabilitation services, on-the-job training and related programs for individuals with disabilities under Part A of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, upon the determination by the designated state agency that for-profit organizations are better qualified to provide vocational rehabilitation services than nonprofit agencies and organizations.

(b) Cooperative agreements with private nonprofit organizations.

Attachment 4.8(b)(3) describes the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

Preprint - Section 6: Program Administration

Section 6: Program Administration

6.1 Designated state agency. (Section 625(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(a))

The designated state agency for vocational rehabilitation services identified in paragraph 1.2 of the Title I State Plan is the state agency designated to administer the State Supported Employment Services Program authorized under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act.

6.2 Statewide assessment of supported employment services needs. (Section 625(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(b))

Attachment 4.11(a) describes the results of the comprehensive, statewide needs assessment conducted under Section 101(a)(15)(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and subparagraph 4.11(a)(1) of the Title I State Plan with respect to the rehabilitation needs of individuals with most significant disabilities and their need for supported employment services, including needs related to coordination.

6.3 Quality, scope and extent of supported employment services. (Section 625(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(c) and .50(b)(2))

Attachment 6.3 describes the quality, scope and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive supported employment services. The description also addresses the timing of the transition to extended services to be provided by relevant state agencies, private nonprofit organizations or other sources following the cessation of supported employment service provided by the designated state agency.

6.4 Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds. (Section 625(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(d) and .20)

Attachment 4.11(c)(4) identifies the state's goals and plans with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act.

6.5 Evidence of collaboration with respect to supported employment services and extended services. (Sections 625(b)(4) and (5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(e))

Attachment 4.8(b)(4) describes the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities to assist in the provision of supported employment services and other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations within the state, employers, natural supports, and other entities with respect to the provision of extended services.

6.6 Minority outreach. (34 CFR 363.11(f))

Attachment 4.11(d) includes a description of the designated state agency's outreach procedures for identifying and serving individuals with the most significant disabilities who are minorities.

6.7 Reports. (Sections 625(b)(8) and 626 of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(h) and .52)

The designated state agency submits reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the commissioner may require and collects the information required by Section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under Part B, of Title VI and individuals receiving supported employment services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

Preprint - Section 7: Financial Administration

7.1 Five percent limitation on administrative costs. (Section 625(b)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(g)(8))

The designated state agency expends no more than five percent of the state's allotment under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for administrative costs in carrying out the State Supported Employment Services Program.

7.2 Use of funds in providing services. (Sections 623 and 625(b)(6)(A) and (D) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.6(c)(2)(iv), .11(g)(1) and (4))

(a) Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act are used by the designated state agency only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive such services.

(b) Funds provided under Title VI, Part B, are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act, in providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment.

(c) Funds provided under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act are not used to provide extended services to individuals who are eligible under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

Preprint - Section 8: Provision of Supported Employment Services

8.1 Scope of supported employment services. (Sections 7(36) and 625(b)(6)(F) and (G) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54), 363.11(g)(6) and (7))

(a) Supported employment services are those services as defined in Section 7(36) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54).

(b) To the extent job skills training is provided, the training is provided on-site.

(c) Supported employment services include placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

8.2 Comprehensive assessments of individuals with significant disabilities. (Sections 7(2)(B) and 625(b)(6)(B); 34 CFR 361.5(b)(6)(ii) and 363.11(g)(2))

The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under Section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome.

8.3 Individualized plan for employment. (Sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 625(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.46(b) and 363.11(g)(3) and (5))

(a) An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.45 and .46 is developed and updated using funds under Title I.

(b) The individualized plan for employment:

1. specifies the supported employment services to be provided;
2. describes the expected extended services needed; and
3. identifies the source of extended services, including natural supports, or, to the extent that it is not possible to identify the source of extended services at the time the individualized plan for employment plan is developed, a statement describing the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that sources will become available.

(c) Services provided under an individualized plan for employment are coordinated with services provided under other individualized plans established under other federal or state programs.

Attachment 4.2(c) Input of State Rehabilitation Council

Required annually by all agencies except those agencies that are independent consumer-controlled commissions.

Identify the Input provided by the state rehabilitation council, including recommendations from the council's annual report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other council reports. Be sure to also include:

- the Designated state unit's response to the input and recommendations; and
- explanations for the designated state unit's rejection of any input or recommendation of the council.

State Rehabilitation Council Recommendations and Commission Responses

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has an active and productive State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). SRC members through their area consumer advisory councils, SRC sub committees, task forces, quarterly meetings and the annual consumer conference have conducted surveys and needs assessments that have provided input to more effectively address the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

This year, funds were deemed sufficient, for the first time in many years, for MRC to select all eligible individuals to receive vocational rehabilitation services regardless of priority category. The SRC was consulted and supported the MRC in this decision. In the event that future funding proves insufficient, the MRC in partnership with the SRC will re-evaluate the need to establish an order of selection in order to prioritize eligible individuals to receive services based on the severity of their functional limitations.

The SRC, through the SRC State Plan sub-committee, has made the following recommendations to the Commission:

Recommendation 1:

While the Mass. Rehabilitation Commission has made solid progress in the areas of job placement services for both consumers and employers, it is still necessary to develop a more effective database that would enable employers to directly post jobs on the internal MRC database, which would be accessible to consumers.

- The SRC recommends that access to resumes of MRC consumers be made available to employers. The SRC also recommends that MRC explore the feasibility of cataloguing all job leads.

MRC has always had a strong commitment to building internal job placement resources which has included job placement specialists in most area offices to develop office and district listings of job ready customers and to work closely with employers to place customers in existing jobs and to develop new ones.

MRC has implemented an innovative business strategy to increase the VR Division's focus on placement and employment outcomes. The job placement services for MRC job seekers were realigned and enhanced with hiring 6 employment service specialists with competitive private industry experience in sales, marketing and management. This approach augmented MRC's current structure which utilizes job placement specialists to assist rehabilitation counselors for job placement. This business strategy coincides with the National Employment Team (NET)/VR Business Network and encompasses accessing high-demand jobs utilizing a collaborative approach with business. The overarching function and role of the employment services specialist includes developing and expanding national, regional, and local employers within various labor-market sectors thus branding MRC and creating employer accounts that routinely hire and retain MRC job candidates through a "Call Us First" Program. This approach has found the "hidden" job market, thus leveling the playing field for candidates with disabilities. Before a job is publically advertised, business contacts the VR agency first. MRC has designed an effective strategy which gives national, regional, and local companies direct access to MRC and the ability to post high-demand jobs on the MRC internal "job board". This job board is available throughout the Commonwealth and is updated every 30 days.

MRC has also purchased a software program called ResuMate to assist agency employment and placement staff in basic job matching between available employment opportunities and consumer resumes and skills. The program has been distributed to placement staff.

MRC has also partnered with:

1. The OFCCP (Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs) to develop an employment initiative to promote competitive integrated employment of individuals with disabilities with federal contractors. An initial hiring event was held in March 2013 for MRC consumers. MRC is using an account-based management approach to manage placements with federal contractors. The objective is to establish an annual employer hiring event and to work on an ongoing basis to place individuals with disabilities into employment with federal contractors. 140 consumers were interviewed, 84 were selected to move further along in the hiring process, and 46 individuals have been initially placed into employment to date. MRC is conducting a survey of the federal contractors who participated and will be tracking the outcomes of this initiative to measure its effectiveness.
2. The Merit Apprenticeship Program (MAP). The MAP program allows for paid apprenticeships in the trades. This program is authorized and supported by the Massachusetts Secretary of Labor.
3. Manpower Staffing Services to deploy web-based training program. This program allows Commission job seekers to be participants in virtual training programs that are linked to high-demand jobs. Job candidates receive competency certificates for successfully completing the training.

In addition, the On the Job evaluation and training program is very active and there are dedicated funds to keep the program moving forward with branding our direct employer training program within all labor sectors and The Commission has developed an employer account management

program to build long term employer partnerships such as Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, AlliedBarton Security, Manpower, TJX and CVS.

Recommendation 2:

- The SRC recommends that MRC work to foster strong partnerships with regional transit authorities to address consumer transportation barriers with special attention to the need for night and weekend transportation for people with disabilities who work in the late shifts and weekends. The SRC also recommends that MRC explore establishing a pilot program that may include a consumer small business to furnish transportation to individuals with disabilities who live in rural areas.

MRC supports and is actively working toward developing more accessible and affordable transportation options for individuals with disabilities in cooperation with regional transit authorities including those individuals who may choose to work shifts outside of a nine to five business day.

While many of the metropolitan areas in Massachusetts have some form of public transportation including Para-transit, it is not accessible for everyone. To address this issue, MRC continues to work with regional authorities, to attend their meetings and to assist individuals in getting their transportation needs met. However, in addition to having an evening or weekend work schedules many people may take children to school or day care on their way to work, or live beyond the reach of a transit system. For these reasons, MRC has refunded the Good News Garage Donated Vehicle Program and has acquired an adaptive van to be used with the Commission's Driver Evaluation and Training Program. Both programs are alternative solutions to help connect people with disabilities to work. MRC is also a part of Governor Patrick's statewide multi agency Transportation Coordination Initiative which works with regional transit authorities to develop more transportation options for individuals with disabilities.

MRC had a pilot project funded by a transportation options grant several years ago to increase transportation for individuals with disabilities who lived in rural areas. The project was ultimately unsuccessful due to prohibitive high cost for the transportation which averaged thirty five dollars for a one way a trip, far too expensive for commuting to work on a regular basis.

The Good News Garage Donated Vehicle Program, in cooperation with MRC provides refurbished donated vehicles to individuals with disabilities who otherwise could not afford the cost to purchase their own. To be eligible to receive a vehicle under this program an individual must be: a MRC eligible consumer; have a written Individual Plan for Employment; need transportation for employment or retention of employment only; have no ready access to public transportation and not own a car or have access to the use of a car; possess a Massachusetts Drivers License; have resources to register, insure, and inspect vehicle; have a good driving record; and participate in the training program on care, maintenance and registration of the vehicle. To date 229 MRC consumers 72 of them within the past year, have received donated vehicles and the vast majority of those consumers have gained employment as a result of their transportation needs being met.

The adaptive van is being used to evaluate individuals with disabilities to determine the type of driving equipment required to assist them with driving and to provide driver training lessons and instruction on how to use adaptive equipment. The van has state of the art adaptive technology and is benefiting many individuals served by MRC to go to work and live independently in the community.

MRC actively supports consumers in exploring opportunities to become small business owners including perhaps a small transportation business. A decision to support consumers in any small business venture is done on a case by case basis.

As transportation is often a barrier to employment in suburban and rural communities, the Donated Vehicle Program and the adaptive van can assist individuals to start and continue in their own businesses as well as working in existing businesses.

MRC's Research and Development Department in conjunction with the SRC will be conducting a survey with current Commission consumers to assess their transportation needs for employment this year.

Recommendation 3:

Over the past three (3) years there has been a steady increase of clients identified with Learning Disabilities coming into the MRC for Vocational Rehabilitation [VR] Services and is now the 2nd highest group coming to the MRC for VR services. Individuals with LD and ADHD are often chronically under-employed in professional occupations and/or report frequent job dissatisfaction in those jobs they do obtain.

The recommended Partnership Plus program being suggested in the yearly SRC recommendations Report to the MRC over the last in last few years generally relate to individuals that may be on SSI or SSDI, in many cases Learning Disabilities/ADHD are not covered by SSI /SSDI, it's unclear as to how LD/ADHD clients not on SSI/SSDI could be included and take advantage of this program. The Supported Employment Services program while well defined and well run, are for consumers who need extended on-going supports to maintain employment.

The SRC recommends that MRC establish a LD/ADHD Life Support Program.

MRC agrees with the SRC's recommendation that there is a great need for long term supports for consumers with LD and ADHD. Individuals with these disabilities are often chronically under-employed in professional occupations and/or report frequent job dissatisfaction in those jobs they do obtain. In a needs assessment conducted by MRC Research and Development Department in consultation with the SRC, a significant number of consumers with LD and ADHD disabilities reported a need for life support skills to obtain or maintain long term participation in educational or vocational training programs and employment.

MRC's State-wide Employment Services Department currently offers the Partnership Plus Program that can supply these needed long term on-going life support services through

competitive integrated employment services (CIES) vendors to assist consumers who receive SSI or SSDI benefits with time management, organization assistance and other necessary supports to prevent consumers from feeling overwhelmed, dropping out of educational programs and losing jobs. MRC has initiated a proactive post employment services approach by entering into a Service Agreement with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) who also functions as Employer Networks (EN) to provide time limited job retention and other types of post employment services to increase job retention. Use of these supports will be based on consumer need and range from a minimum of 2 hours to a maximum of 10 hours per month, at a rate of \$34.24 per hour not to exceed 8 months. In addition, for those consumers who achieve SGA levels for 8 months, MRC will make a one-time payment of \$896.00. On referral to the CRP/EN those consumers who are SSI/DI eligible would be encouraged to assign his/her Ticket to Work to the participating CRP/EN.

MRC will continue to research other funding sources including the LEAD (The Leadership Emergence and Development) Project to supply needed support services to consumers with LD/ADHD.

In addition, the Taskforce and the Research and Development Department did a study of area colleges (all community colleges and fifteen four year colleges) to see what kind of support programs were offered to students with LD/ADHD. The results of the study indicated that that MRC could assist the schools in the area of student/faculty education. Information will be built into the client tracking system within the next year to identify the exact schools MRC consumers were attending.

MRC's Research and Development Department has also worked closely with the SRC LD/ADHD Taskforce to develop educational materials for MRC consumers and agency staff.

The materials are available on the MRC intranet website.

Recommendation 4:

- The SRC recommends that MRC develop survey tools to identify the difficulties clients, service providers, and employers have in accessing the website and what is needed to make it more accessible and user-friendly

MRC agrees with the SRC's recommendation that its website needs to present information in a clear, user friendly manner that will allow individuals to easily find the services they need and be accessible to individuals with disabilities that often face unique challenges both physical and cognitive.

The MRC Marketing Strategy Team developed a survey tool last year to collect feedback from staff, consumers, providers, employers and others about what they knew about Commission services and how they learned them. In addition to the survey, focus groups were extensively used.

The public website was found to be a major source of information about MRC services but there were some complaints that it was not as accessible and user friendly as it could be. Recommendations for improvement from the survey and the focus groups were shared with the agency webmaster.

EOHHS (the Executive Office of Health and Human Services) of which MRC is a part, has consolidated all information technology (IT) services across the secretariat with the goal of to allow services to be accessed more easily by consumers and to allow EOHHS to become more efficient, cost effective and avoid unnecessary duplication of IT services. ITD (Information Technology Division) has implemented changes to Mass.gov, the state website that makes the site more users friendly and accessible while allowing MRC more control over the organization of their content. EOHHS IT staff assigned to work with MRC will be working closely to further align information that reflects the totality of the agency service delivery within the larger context of EOHHS.

Recommendation 5:

The SRC recommends that the MRC continue to ensure that a smoother transition process for youth with disabilities is in place. The SRC encourages MRC to incorporate the best practices from the Transition Works grant; to start the transition planning process while students are still in school; to support self-determination and advocacy programs and to provide clear information on transition services by communicating directly with youth, parents, schools and other interested parties.

MRC has long worked with local schools to outreach to students with disabilities. It has been a standing practice for MRC counselors to work closely with their local schools to meet with students, parents and teachers to explain agency services and to open vocational rehabilitation cases for those interested students who had either just graduated or were about to graduate from high school. MRC has increased its efforts to outreach to local schools by ensuring that there is at least one counselor assigned to each public school in the state. Area office counselors continue to work closely with local school systems, to meet with students, teachers and parents to explain agency services and to open VR cases. As a result of these efforts, the percentage of transition students served has increased to over 60%.

MRC won a five year \$2.7 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education in October, 2007 to assist in the transition of young adults (ages 16 to 26) with significant disabilities from school to work in the metropolitan school districts of Boston, Springfield and Worcester. This initiative called Transition Works: Innovative Strategies for Transitioning Youths with Disabilities from School to Work included vocational rehabilitation counselors partnering with local school districts to support youth with significant disabilities in their transitions from school to work, post-secondary education and independent living to improve post-school outcomes for students with disabilities and disseminate successful evidence –based transition practices statewide.

MRC partnered in this initiative with the Massachusetts Department of Education, the Federation for Children with Special Needs, Urban Pride, Commonwealth Corporation and the Institute for

Community Inclusion and collaborated with other state and community agencies working with transition-age youth with disabilities. MRC also developed an inclusive Statewide Advisory Board and local advisory boards of key stakeholders, including youth, parents, school systems and independent living centers to provide guidance and direction to the project. Services provided through this grant included person-centered planning, peer mentoring, job readiness training, soft skills training, job placement, and extensive assessment and follow-up support services.

Over the five-year grant period, Transition Works staff provided outreach to the over 2,500 students at selected high schools in the three regions over the grant period, with specific emphasis on traditionally un-served and under-served populations. The program served a minimum of 750 youths with significant disabilities and successfully transitioned 450 students from high school to post-secondary education, vocational training programs or employment over the five-year grant term.

Through this grant program, MRC took a more active role in transition planning. Developing a system of wrap-around youth vocational rehabilitation services that shifts a predominately, adult-based service system toward a system that can equally service youth. MRC grant model immersed three Transition Specialists, who are qualified rehabilitation counselors, into high schools to bring vocational rehabilitation services directly to students.

Transition Specialists arranged meetings at the school that were short in duration and task focused to explore vocational assessment tools and techniques geared for youth with minimal or no work experience. They developed a menu of work experiences for youth including volunteer experiences, job shadowing, and internships both paid and unpaid, mentoring, part time employment and summer paid jobs.

Transition specialists have been hired as fulltime vocational rehabilitation counselors.

The Transition Works Grant was awarded a one-year, no-cost extension of the original 5-year grant which will conclude on September 30, 2013. As the Grant comes to its conclusion, MRC has compiled much information and gained extensive experience working with high school staff, youth based community resources, families and students. Three state-wide agency trainings were held which reviewed strategies for working with students, referral to eligibility, plan development and job development. Specific topics included:

- How to develop and maintain relationships with school staff
- How to explain MRC to young adults
- How to involve families
- Using school documents to determine eligibility and OOS
- Vocational assessment

- IPE services during high school
- Resumes for youth with little or no work experience
- Benefits of working in groups
- Initial work experience
- Summer Work Programs

The final 6-year report will be compiled and sent to RSA by 9/30/13. Resource information will be included in the Intranet Site created as a product of the Transition Works Grant, as well as the MRC Administrative Office Resource Archives.

MRC and the Department of Developmental Services also have established a Memorandum of Agreement for joint planning and sharing of resources for transition aged individuals, aged 18 to 22 who have a goal of competitive employment and are eligible for the services of both agencies. MRC anticipates an increase in the number of successful job placements in this population as a result of this partnership.

The state Executive Office of Health and Human Services has established a youth “state as model employer” summer work experience program for students in the state’s human services agencies including MRC. The programs features and benefits include: soft skills orientation training; paid summer work experience; specific skill development; peer and career mentorship experience; resume development; written employment references and graduation. MRC’s goal is to expand this program to serve 30 consumers. The SRC has recommended that this program be continued and that more such programs be developed including year round internship programs for students with disabilities.

This screen was last updated on Aug 1 2013 11:32AM by Teresa Walsh

Attachment 4.7(b)(3) Request for Waiver of Statewideness

Identify the types of services to be provided by the program for which the waiver of statewideness is requested.

The waiver request should also include:

- a written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the designated state unit the non-federal share of funds;
- a written assurance that designated state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect;
- a written assurance that all state plan requirements will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

This agency **has not** requested a waiver of statewideness.

not required

This screen has never been updated.

Attachment 4.8(b)(1) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment 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 investment system with respect to

- Federal, state, and local agencies and programs;
- if applicable, Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture; and
- if applicable, state use contracting programs.

Attachment 4.8 (b) (1)

RSA State Plan

Federal Fiscal Year 2008

Cooperation with Agencies that are not in the Workforce Investment System and with Other Entities

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission considers cooperation and collaboration with other agencies particularly human service agencies, to be essential and beneficial to most effectively serving people with disabilities and to providing the optimum opportunity for employment. Other agencies provide critical supports, necessary resources, and dedicated human service professionals all of which augment and enhance the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. For many years the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has worked closely and corporately with the staff of other agencies in serving mutual consumers. Collaboration often extends well beyond services to particular individuals. The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission works with other agencies to:

- Affect system change
- Increase resources, funding and service options
- Improve communication and mutual understanding among staff
- Change Public attitude toward issues of disability
- Achieve common goals on behalf of those whom the agencies serve

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, in working with other agencies, takes a predictable approach to collaboration and puts forth an agenda that is common to all interagency relationships.

First, linkages, agreements or understandings are established at State, Regional and local levels. Typically, the state level, with input from regional and local personnel, develops a blueprint for collaboration and an action plan. The regional level oversees the implementation of the action plan. At the local level, the actions are activated and implemented. Comprehensive inter-agency cooperation requires the full commitment and participation of all three organizational levels.

Inter-agency cooperation in which the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission participates typically encompasses all of the following collaboration measures:

Planning: There is a statewide planning structure that establishes an action plan incorporating diverse needs and perspectives. This process results in a cooperative agreement, a memorandum of understanding, or some type of action plan to which two or more agencies are committed.

Information Exchange: A commitment is made to exchange information about resources, funding, policy and other matters necessary to mutual understanding of mission, goals, capacity, eligibility and the like.

Identification of Liaisons: Generally, both parties identify contact persons for the purpose of communication and referral and responsible persons for issues and problem resolution.

Cross-Training: All agency cooperation acknowledges the need for and addresses cross-training of personnel. This is not only critical to mutual understanding, but also is essential in effective, reciprocal utilization of services and appropriate referral.

Collaboration on Resources:

Effective cooperation between agencies acknowledges that more can be done with less when resources are most effectively combined and when duplication is avoided whenever possible. Sharing of resources is much more than splitting the cost. It encompasses which agency does what for whom, when, where and how. Some of the rudiments for resource collaboration are set forth in written agreements and planning documents. Much of this collaboration, however, can only happen at the service level through honest and regular communication. Cooperation in which the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission engages strives to set the environment conducive to the frankness, openness, and, whenever possible flexibility necessary for collaboration on sharing of resources.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has, with several agencies and organizations, written agreements, memoranda of understanding, written work plans and/or verbal commitments on which both parties have acted. Agencies with which such collaboration has occurred and has remained active locally and at the Statewide level include, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Mental Retardation, the Social Security Administration, the Division of Medical Assistance, the Department of Transitional Assistance, the Department of Employment and Training and the Department of Education.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission further collaborates with organizations that provide services, in whole or in part, to specific constituencies. Among such organizations are the Massachusetts Association of Financial Aid Administrators, the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council, the Arthritis Foundation, the Massachusetts Multiple Sclerosis Society, the Massachusetts Easter Seals, United Cerebral Palsy, the Massachusetts Head Injury Association, and the Epilepsy Association. These collaborations take the form of cooperative agreements and, sometimes, service contracts. The purpose, goals, and actions established in these agreements and contracts are very similar to the agendas set forth in interagency collaboration.

There are no programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and no state use contracting programs.

This screen was last updated on Jul 29 2009 1:12PM by Teresa Walsh

Attachment 4.8(b)(2) Coordination with Education Officials

- Describe 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 vocational rehabilitation services, including provisions for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or, if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection, before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting.
- Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency with respect to
 - 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;
 - transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs;
 - roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
 - procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

Attachment 4.8 (b) (2)

RSA State Plan

Federal Fiscal Year 2008

Coordination with Education Officials:

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission works with local school districts to ensure that eligible high school students with disabilities have the benefit of transition services that lead to successful post-school outcomes in employment and post-secondary education. MRC provides outreach to assist local high schools to identify students who may be appropriate referrals for MRC programs/services. For those students who are eligible for services there will be individualized planning to determine goals and services bases on their interests, strengths, and needs.

The Massachusetts Department of Education and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission updated their Memorandum of Understanding in 2003 to ensure that students with disabilities have the benefit of transition planning that includes coordination of the public education and the public vocational rehabilitation systems. Under this agreement MRC and DOE staff provide technical assistance to local school districts regarding transition planning in compliance with state and federal laws and regulations including IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act, and maintain ongoing communication and collaboration between DOE and MRC at the state and local level.

At the local level the Vocational Rehabilitation counselor may work with eligible students to offer career guidance and information about employment opportunities in their area as well as help in college planning, assistive technology, independent living, and other issues of concern to young adults. Counselors may participate in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings with the student and school staff if they are referred for vocational rehabilitation services. For those students who meet MRC eligibility and order of selection criteria; an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) may be developed, approved and implemented prior to exiting high school. Early referral while the student is still in school is strongly encouraged to allow for a smooth transition from school to work and adult life.

Other collaboration related to transition involve the participation of MRC in several innovative federal and state grants. Some initiatives include:

- **Career Quest:** The Career Quest Employment Initiative is an innovative public/private partnership that provides an array of transition and customized employment services to approximately 270 students with disabilities in South Coastal MA. It was established by a partnership of MRC, the South Coastal Workforce Investment Board, and the South Coastal Career Centers under a PWI grant to assist students (ages 16-22) transition from school to work. It is now working with 22 local school districts.
- **Work Boston Collaborative:** WBC is a broad-based partnership with the Boston Public Schools functioning as the lead agency and MRC and other community partners such as Easter Seals and the Boston Private Industry Council working together with BPS high school staff to ensure a smooth transition from school to work for students with disabilities. This unique job development, placement, and training program connects schools and youth agencies with adult service agencies so that job development and placement expertise can be shared across all partners, making the best use of resources.
- **MA Partnership for Youth in Employment (MPYE):** In this grant MRC was involved in four demonstration projects across the state to provide transition-age youth with information about career options and to develop more coordinated and comprehensive transition services. The local Workforce Investment Boards served as the lead agency in these projects with MRC and other state agencies, schools, and family and community organizations as partners. At the end of the grant, project activities were integrated into a statewide initiative called Pathways to Success by 21 (P21) that is focused on improving the outcomes for vulnerable youth ages 16-21 including both those who are in school and those who are out-of-school and out-of-work.

The Commission won a five year \$2.7 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education in October, 2007 to assist in the transition of young adults (ages 16 to 26) with significant disabilities from school to work in the metropolitan school districts of Boston, Springfield and Worcester. This initiative called Transition Works: Innovative Strategies for Transitioning Youths with Disabilities from School to Work includes vocational rehabilitation counselors partnering with local school districts to support 450 youth with significant disabilities in their transitions from school to work, post-secondary education and independent living. The Commission's goal is to improve post-school outcomes for students with disabilities and disseminate successful evidence-based transition practices statewide.

The Commission will partner in this initiative with the Massachusetts Department of Education, the Federation for Children with Special Needs, Urban Pride, Commonwealth Corporation and the Institute for Community Inclusion and collaborate with other state and community agencies working with transition-age youth with disabilities. The Commission has also developed an inclusive Statewide Advisory Board and local advisory boards of key stakeholders, including youth, parents, school systems and independent living centers to provide guidance and direction to the project. Services provided through this grant include person-centered planning, peer mentoring, job readiness training, soft skills training, job placement, and extensive assessment and follow-up support services.

Over the five-year grant period, Transition Works staff will provide outreach to the least 2,500 students at selected high schools in the three regions over the grant period, with specific emphasis on traditionally un-served and under-served populations. The program anticipates serving a minimum of 750 youths with significant disabilities and successfully transitioning 450 students from high school to post-secondary education, vocational training programs or employment over the five-year grant term.

The Commission has also increased its efforts to outreach to local schools by ensuring that there is at least one counselor assigned to each public school in the state.

An interagency cooperative agreement was established between the Commission and Institutions of Higher Education(IHE). This agreement clarifies the roles and responsibilities of both the Commission and IHE to ensure consistent services for students of IHE that are also customers of the Commission.

Responsibilities of IHE include: equal access to educational programs and services to persons with disabilities; to provide reasonable accommodations as needed and to arrange and/or coordinate appropriate accommodations.

Responsibilities of the Commission include: providing VR services to those students with disabilities that do not fall under the responsibilities of IHE for accommodation and equal access; providing technical assistance to IHE to determine accommodation and equal access needs for students with disabilities; providing adaptive equipment and technology under an IPE for eligible students; providing vocational counseling and job placement services to qualified students with disabilities; and providing to the financial aid officer(FAO) after authorization of a written release by the qualified student, all necessary information to allow the FAO to calculate financial amounts for grants and awards. Joint responsibilities include: to collaborate in the coordination and provision of services; to communicate to ensure timely services and to share information in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

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Attachment 4.8(b)(3) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

Describe the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

Attachment 4.8 (b) (3)

RSA State Plan

Federal Fiscal Year 2008

Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-Profit Vocational Rehabilitation Service Providers

Preface

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has, for many years, worked in partnership with community rehabilitation providers to develop a wide array of programs and services to assist people with disabilities to achieve suitable employment outcomes. The MRC and community rehabilitation providers have collaborated to develop programs.

These include: Vocational Services, Community Based Employment Services, Extended Employment and a wide array of support services essential in vocational rehabilitation. This collaborative relationship has been achieved through open communication, sharing of ideas and resources, mutual support and understanding and inclusiveness of all partners in the development of and implementation of service design.

Narrative

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission develops programs and services with the participation of providers in several forums.

1. Statewide Rehabilitation Providers Advisory Council that meets twice annually.
2. Quarterly meetings with representatives of the Executive Committee of the Massachusetts Association of Community Rehabilitation Agencies.
3. Periodic district wide meetings with community rehabilitation programs.
4. Interagency and cross-disability agency councils.
5. Employment Services Action Council.
6. Task specific work teams.

7. Mass Chapter of the Association for Persons in Supported Employment

8. State Rehabilitation Council.

Community rehabilitation program directors and staff are routinely invited to and actively participate in all MRC planning activities including the development of the State Plan. State regulation drafts are distributed to community rehabilitation programs and their comments are solicited both in writing and in public hearings.

In 1996-1999 community rehabilitation program personnel actively participated in the updating of the State regulation for the Extended Employment Program as well as the process for competitive procurement for community based employment services, vocational services and the extended employment program, as well as the flexible finance work team, the temp help work team, the disability employment pilot project work team and the mental health services work team. A few examples of the outcome of these work teams can be described as follows:

In 1996 a task force of community rehabilitation programs and MRC staff working with the Massachusetts Division of Purchased and Procurement Services, the Department of Mental Health and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind released an interagency competitive bid for community based employment services. This included for the first time real pricing of community rehabilitation programs. From 1998-1999 a work team of community rehabilitation providers, MRC staff, the Department of Mental Retardation, the Department of Mental Health and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind worked closely to redesign the MRC Extended Employment Program to better meet the needs of the MRC consumers. This redesigned program went into effect July, 1999 and a group of individuals still meet to monitor the implementation of the changes. This included for the first time real pricing of community rehabilitation program services and performance reimbursement, especially considering the proliferation of integrated, community-based assessment, training and placement services. This will help to financially stabilize community rehabilitation programs.

Finally, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services have for the past 10 years co-chaired an interagency committee that has defined employment services and begun a process of interagency collaboration for maximizing effective use of available resources for these services. Among the programs and services that have been discussed and defined are evaluation and training, work adjustment, job support, assessment, placement, initial employment support and extended services. The participants in this effort include community rehabilitation programs, advocates, consumers, parents, and other agencies including the Department of Mental Retardation, the Department of Mental Health, the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, the Department of Education and the Division of Employment and Training.

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Attachment 4.8(b)(4) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

Describe the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide the following services to individuals with the most significant disabilities:

- supported employment services; and
- extended services.

Attachment 4.8 (b) (4)

RSA State Plan

Federal Fiscal Year 2008

Evidence of Collaboration regarding

Supported Employment Services and Extended Services

Preface

Since the 1986 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, through its human service agencies, has been developing supported employment initiatives. By 1990, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) had identified the Office of Statewide Employment Services (SES) at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission as the lead office in the Massachusetts Supported Employment Initiative. SES and a representative of the EOHHS convened an Advisory Council to address the development, implementation and expansion of supported employment services in Massachusetts. This advisory Council was the first step at coordination of efforts. It continues to develop an active work plan and meets monthly to address the activities.

Also, as part of the 1986 amendments, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has worked with other human service agencies to identify and secure funding for extended supports for individuals in supported employment. Funding for extended services has been available from several sources depending on the nature of a client's disability and the resources available to each provider agency. However in 1997 the EOHHS created a process that made it easier for state agencies to cost share the service needs of consumers. This service delivery system is currently in place. With the implementation of this initiative we have seen an increase in the available money for extended services. This funding is secured at a local level each situation handled individually.

Sources include:

- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Mental Retardation
- Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission State Revenue
- Statewide Head Injury Program
- Social Security Administration Work Incentives
- Private Sector Natural Supports
- United Way monies

Narrative

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has used many procedures to guarantee collaboration with respect to supported employment services and extended services. This is also evidenced in the number of joint funded programs that have developed. Some examples of these collaborative programs are joint funding of services for individuals with mental retardation between the MRC and the Department of Mental Retardation; for individuals who are psychiatrically disabled between MRC and the Department of Mental Health; for individuals who have traumatic brain injuries between the Statewide Head Injury Program of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.

In October 1997, the four disability agencies in Massachusetts collaborated on the release of a competitive bid for Community Based Employment Services. This was the first ever, interagency collaboration of its kind. Because of this effort, a supported employee will be able to access their system of supports in a more streamlined fashion that incorporates consumer choice and is outcome driven. This effort is designed to offer all supports to consumers, including extended services. Through this effort the disability agencies can now easily cost share the support services for people with disabilities.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has used many procedures to guarantee collaboration with respect to funding for extended services. The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has in place interagency service agreements with the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Mental Retardation, which makes reference to funding extended services for supported employment. Coupled with this the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission administers a state funded extended services in supported employment. Because of the vigorous emphasis on supported employment in Massachusetts, the Commission and supported employment service providers have met with much enthusiasm and joint collaboration in long-term services from other human service agencies.

As previously stated, for many years MRC has been collaborating with state agencies to promote collaboration regarding Supported Employment Services and Extended Services. An excellent example of that continuing collaboration is a recent initiative that is currently underway. In July or 2006, SES, the MRC Salem Area Office and the Department of Mental Retardation, North Shore Area Office of the North East Region ventured into a partnership to collaborate resources to serve 25 individuals who are currently receiving Day Services through DMR. This supported employment initiative utilize the counseling and guidance of the VR Counselors, the program coordination of the SES Program Specialist and the Job Development and Job coaching of the Community Rehabilitation Providers and an innovative position of “Facilitator” through the Department of Mental Retardation. The agreement also assures long term support funding through DMR after successful VR closure.

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Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

1. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

- the number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
- the number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
- projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state 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.

PROJECTED STAFFING NEEDS STAFFING PROFILE

The Commission employs a total of 816 persons, 418 of whom are employed in the VR Program. Of this number, 201 are VR counselors, 42 are first-line supervisors, 43 are managers and 132 are program, technical, or administrative staff. All numbers represent full and part-time staff, not FTE.

Twenty six percent of Commission staff is from minority backgrounds, 73% are women, 16% are persons with disabilities, and 2% are Vietnam-era veterans.

Most counselors carry "general caseloads" consisting of consumers representing all disability populations; a smaller number of counselors carry "specialty" caseloads consisting primarily of consumers with the same/similar disabilities (i.e., severe mobility impairments, psychiatric disabilities or special linguistic needs). The ratio of counselors to consumers averages one counselor per 150 consumers for general caseloads.

The current annual turnover rate for Commission staff is over 10%, an increase from a historical rate of 5 to 7%. In the past year, the Commission has posted a total of 59 VR positions which include: 39 counselor positions, 10 manager positions, 1 unit/first line supervisor position, 10 program/technical or administrative staff positions. These positions were not new positions but were back filled when staff left their positions for other jobs or retired.

103 VR funded individuals are projected to retire by 2015. Many other individuals will be approaching retirement age within the next five to 10 years as the average age in the Commission is 50 with over 20 years of agency experience. Several of these individuals are in manager and

administrative positions in the central office which are paid through VR monies and many more are counselor, first line supervisor and manager positions in the field.

Twenty eight counselor and job placement positions funded through ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) and re-allotment monies. Seventeen were retained by the Commission. Seventeen of these individuals were recruited into counselor positions vacated by retiring staff.

The Commission will need to evaluate which positions can continue to be back filled due to possible funding shortages and state hiring caps. This might necessitate organizational restructuring, re-alignment of counselor caseloads, supervisory duties and responsibilities and the increasing use of technology. The Commission is also using some of its ARRA and re-allotment funding to convert the Commission’s automated caseload management system to a web based system and give each counselor a laptop. This will allow counselors to become more mobile; seeing consumers and imputing necessary consumer data in a variety of settings.

The chart below represents the vacancies that were posted for this past year with projections based on this year projected over 5 years. As stated previously these totals can be affected by funding issues at the federal and state level.

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	vocational rehabilitation counselors	201	39	195
2	unit/first line supervisors	42	1	5
3	managers	43	4	20

4	program/technical or administrative staff	132	15	75
5		0	0	0
6		0	0	0
7		0	0	0
8		0	0	0
9		0	0	0
10		0	0	0

2. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

- a list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;
- the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- 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.

CSPD IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTIVITIES

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has taken the necessary steps to implement the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) that meets the requirements of section 101(a)(7) and 34 CFR 361.18. Designed to ensure and maintain an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel, all steps have begun and are described below. Periodic concerns surface in discussions with the Commonwealth's Division of Human Resources, the Civil Service Commission and the Collective Bargaining Units that may have a bearing on some aspects of CSPD implementation. These issues will continue to be addressed as needed in the program implementation.

PERSONNEL DATA

The Commission utilizes the Commonwealth's Human Resource Compensation Management System (HRCMS) to manage its personnel data. This system utilizes state-of-the-art software to provide a comprehensive and integrated system of personnel data management. In conjunction with the HRCMS, the Commission has a designated CSPD database to monitor individual employee academic credentials and qualifications as related to the requirements of the CSPD standard. The CSPD data system is also used to coordinate and monitor individual employee educational plans and to provide statistical data to top level administrators and field managers and supervisors on CSPD plan achievement to ensure that all counselors maintain an aggressive schedule to meet the highest degree requirements in the State. The system lists all personnel by position type and allows for analysis and projections of the number of counselors needed. MIS data compiled and managed by the Research and Development Unit provides current data as to client-counselor ratios vis-à-vis number of clients served.

ENROLLMENT STATISTICS

In a given academic year, upwards of 100 undergraduate students and 125 graduate students are enrolled in degree programs either full-time or part-time as rehabilitation "majors" at the colleges and universities referenced above. Each year, upwards of 50 undergraduate students are awarded the Bachelor's degree and upwards of 60 graduate level students graduate with credentials to qualify for certification by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification and/or licensure by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Row	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year

1	Assumption College	101	2	33	0
2	Springfield College	42	2	14	15
3	University of Massachusetts at Boston	24	14	8	9
4		0	0	0	0
5		0	0	0	0

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Describe the development (updated on an annual basis) 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.

STAFF RECRUITMENT/SELECTION/RETENTION

Representatives from the Commission’s Staff Development Department will continue to visit annually with officials of the CORE accredited rehabilitation departments and officials responsible for minority outreach at Assumption College, Springfield College, and the University of Massachusetts at Boston regarding pertinent information on the preparation of rehabilitation professionals and for the specific purpose of recruiting graduates for employment in the federal/state VR Program. Special emphasis will be given to students with disabilities and students from minority backgrounds.

Additionally, Commission staff also regularly addresses rehabilitation students in the classroom setting providing them with an overview of the agency and the public rehabilitation program. Internal job postings are automatically sent to these institutions informing them of job openings and procedures to apply. A number of rehabilitation students also complete their field placement and practicum experience within the Commission affording them a realistic view of work in the Commission. The Commission has sponsored 56 paid internships since 2010; 20 of those interns have been hired as full time employees.

The Commission also maintains relationships with nearly forty minority referral sources and routinely forwards all job postings to them thereby encouraging application for employment at all job levels from persons from minority backgrounds. Position openings are routinely advertised in minority and alternative newspapers and posted internally and externally on the Internet (Commonwealth of Massachusetts Employment Opportunities).

Personnel Standards

Describe the state agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

1. standards that are consistent with any national or state-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services; and
2. to the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the State Plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, institutions of higher education, and other public agencies of these steps and the timelines for taking each step.

Be sure to include the following:

- specific strategies for retraining, recruiting, and hiring personnel;
- the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards;
- procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period;
- the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards;

- the identification of a plan for training newly hired personnel who do not meet the established standards to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

Consistent with CSPD requirements, personnel standards for the VR counselor position were officially changed and incorporated into Commonwealth's Civil Service Job Specifications effective July 1, 2001. Entry-level standards are based on the highest entry-level degree requirements in the State, i.e. the Commonwealth's licensure requirements for Rehabilitation Counselors: a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or master's degree in an approved related field with the completion of graduate coursework in each of five (5) designated Rehabilitation Core Knowledge areas.

All VR counselors and first-line supervisors who perform the essential functions of the counselor position and who do not meet the new entry-level standards are required to be on an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and demonstrate annual progress towards meeting the appropriate requirements. Those who fail to demonstrate progress jeopardize their employment status within the Commission. New counselors are required to meet the standard prior to hire unless a situation exists where the caseload population requires a special language or skill or the job title is considered under parity for Affirmative Action purposes. In these instances, Individual Educational Plans are developed upon hire and these staff are required to meet the standard according to an agreed upon plan and schedule. All individual educational plans are submitted to the Human Resource Liaison/Training Director for final review and approval and become part of the central CSPD database and tracking system.

TRAINING OPTIONS

In view of individual needs and abilities, the Commission has implemented a variety of options to assist staff in meeting CSPD requirements. They are as follows:

CORE Accredited Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling: A number of counselors are currently enrolled in these degree programs at one of the Core accredited institutions in Massachusetts and pursue the degree on a part-time basis.

Rehabilitation Related Master's Degree at State Colleges and Universities: Since a rehabilitation-related master's degree coupled with coursework in the five designated core areas is acceptable by the Licensing Board, the Commission approves of this degree option.

Rehabilitation Counseling or Rehabilitation Related Bachelor's Degree Programs: Counselors who do not hold a bachelor's degree may pursue degree programs at State colleges and universities or at one of the CORE accredited institutions in Massachusetts.

PROGRAM OUTCOME

Progress continues to be made to ensure all staff that performs the essential functions of the VR counselor position meets the required CSPD standards. Assuming implementation continues at the current pace, we expect the following program outcomes:

Currently, 243 VR counselors and first-line supervisors (full and part-time, not FTE) perform the essential functions of the VRC and are subject to the standards of the CSPD. Of the 243, 221 hold licensure or certification as a Rehabilitation Counselor (L.R.C or CRC) or meet the academic criteria for the L.R.C/CRC designation, the highest entry-level criteria in the State and Commission's CSPD standard. These individuals do not require any additional coursework.

Of the remaining 22 counselors who must work toward meeting the CSPD requirement two are recently hired bi lingual VR counselors.

Five were granted medical waivers and are required to update their status each semester; eleven are currently enrolled and taking a minimum course per year at the University of Massachusetts. Three VR counselors hold related master's degrees and are working toward completing course work in category D of the CRC and must complete the required courses; all three are students at the University of Massachusetts at Boston and taking one or two courses per year. They will require approximately three years meeting the CSPD requirement.

One VR counselor, hired prior to CSPD requirements are working toward earning a bachelor's degree from Assumption College

Two VR counselors attend Springfield College.

It is unlikely that the Commission will reach 100% compliance in the near future for the following reasons. The Commission has many "seasoned" counselors who will be retiring in the next few years. While completing required graduate courses in all likelihood will retire prior to completion of a master's program in rehabilitation counseling. That said, all seasoned counselors have many years of solid/successful work experience and are closely supervised by supervisors who all meet CSPD. The Commission is also working with a very small pool of bi-lingual job candidates who hold a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. The Commission continues to partner very closely with academic programs offering bachelor and master's degrees in rehabilitation to ensure awareness of potential job candidates and to offer students paid and unpaid internships providing students with the opportunity to gain valuable work experience in the public VR arena. Many interns have been hired when job openings become available.

Staff Development

Describe the state agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated state unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

1. 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; and
2. procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

The commission's Staff Development Unit supports a wide variety of training and development programs for all staff through a comprehensive in-service training program. Over the next five years, a series of workshops and seminars is planned in the following priority areas: basic rehabilitation practices, advanced rehabilitation practices, WIA partnerships: employment outcomes, leadership development and succession training, computer skills, and secretarial skill development. The Commission is authorized to award Continuing Education Units from the Council on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification. The Commonwealth's Board of Allied Health and Human Service Professions to maintain licensure also accepts these credits. In-service programs carry the appropriate number of continuing education units and enable staffs who qualify to maintain their counselor certification and/or meet licensure requirements.

DISSEMINATION OF REHABILITATION MATERIALS

The Commission acquires and routinely disseminates rehabilitation materials to staff such as the latest publications from the Institute on Rehabilitation on Issues, training materials from the Research and training Centers, training guides and resource materials produced by recipients of RSA training grants, and products from the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials. Additionally, each counselor and supervisor has a personal computer giving them access to a wide variety of software applications and thus putting a vast amount of information in the hands of both staff and cons

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.

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.

Of the VR counselors, twelve are skilled in American Sign Language (ASL) and are qualified to work with consumers who are deaf; twenty nine are fluent in Spanish and work with Hispanic consumers; four are able to communicate in Cantonese; four are fluent in Portuguese; four are fluent in Khmer, and two are fluent in French/Haitian Creole. A smaller number of area directors and direct service secretaries are fluent in American Sign Language, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Haitian Creole or Portuguese. Nine full and part time sign language interpreters are also on staff. The Commission also maintains a statewide contract with the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to secure additional ASL interpreters and CART reporters, as needed. Staff with specific language skills and interpreters is geographically placed

so as to coincide with population and other demographics relating to target consumer groups. This strategy will continue to be applied and staff with specialized skills added, as appropriate, for the upcoming year and beyond.

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.

COORDINATION UNDER IDEA

The information in the State plan pertaining to the RSA requirements for a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development is shared with the appropriate State Department of Education unit consistent with the Individual with Disabilities Education Act to assure compliance and coordination of efforts.

This screen was last updated on Aug 16 2013 3:37PM by Teresa Walsh

Attachment 4.11(a) Statewide Assessment

Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:

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

Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

Comprehensive Assessment

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) in conjunction with the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) conducted its annual Comprehensive Statewide VR Consumer Needs Assessment (CSNA) in the fall of 2012. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) requires MRC to conduct a Comprehensive Statewide VR Consumer Needs Assessment least every three years, but MRC administers this survey on an annual basis with the information and findings incorporated into MRC's State Plan, Strategic Planning, and Quality Assurance Activities. The findings on consumer needs listed in this report are presented and shared with MRC Senior Management and VR staff, the entire body of the SRC, and other key stakeholders as part of MRC's State Plan and continuous quality improvement processes. The 2012 CSNA process consisted of a consumer survey, a focus group, analysis of key statistical and demographic information and facts, and collaboration and discussion with the SRC and other key stakeholders.

A pilot focus group of consumers was conducted in September 2012. 1,005 consumers responded to the survey out of a total of 4,094 possible consumer recipients, for a response rate of 24.5%. The number of responses exceeded the amount of required to make statistically significant conclusions at a 99% confidence level according to the Raosoft.com sample size calculator. There was a 21% increase in the number of consumer respondents from the 2011 Needs Assessment and an 11% increase in the number of consumers offered the opportunity to participate in the survey from last year.

Survey Methodology

The 2012 Needs Assessment continued the process utilized in 2010 and 2011 of being administered electronically using Survey Monkey, an online survey tool frequently used by MRC's Research, Development, and Performance Management Department (R&D) which is both accessible and user-friendly to participants and survey researchers.

R&D staff monitored this address to monitor bounced emails, and respond to questions and concerns raised by survey participants.

This year's survey utilized the same sampling frame as the 2011 survey, and included all individuals in Active Service Statuses (12, 16, 18, 20, 22, and 24) and individuals receiving Post Employment Services (Status 32) on September 1, 2012. The same practice of sending emails to all consumers in these statuses with email addresses in the MRCIS system was repeated in this year's survey. This approach yielded a total of 4,956 consumers with email addresses or 25.2% out of a total of 19,680 consumers in these statuses. The proportion of consumers in the sampling frame with email addresses increased 5.8% from 2011, where 19.4% of active consumers in these statuses had email addresses. The proportion of consumers with email addresses is likely to continue to increase going forward as the importance of collecting email addresses was stressed to MRC staff during recent training for the new MRCIS web-based case management system.

1,005 consumers responded to the survey, for a response rate of 24.5%, which is consistent with last year's response rate and comparable to past Needs Assessments. The number of responses exceeded the amount of 572 responses required to make statistically significant conclusions at the 99% confidence level by a total of 433 responses.

The main findings of the 2012 Needs Assessment can be summarized as follows:

1. The Needs Assessment confirms the fact that the majority of consumers served by MRC are people with the most significant disabilities. A majority of consumers indicated the need for multiple Vocational Rehabilitation services and Community Living services to assist them in their efforts to prepare for, choose, and obtain competitive employment. The need for multiple VR services was found to be slightly greater amongst individuals of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds and for individuals with cognitive or psychological disabilities. The need for multiple CL service was greatest among individuals with physical or sensory disabilities.
2. The most important and needed VR services listed by consumers were career counseling (91.9%), job placement (89.9%), ongoing supports to assist in retaining employment (82.1%), benefits planning (79%) and On-the-Job Training or Job Coaching (77.6%)
3. The most important job characteristics that MRC consumers indicated they are looking for in a job include job satisfaction and personal interests (95.1%), an adequate number of hours worked per week (95.1%), a friendly job environment 95.1%, earning a living wage (94.9%), and promotional opportunities (91%).
4. The most common occupational areas of interest listed by MRC consumers included Community/Social/Human Services (32.7%), Health Care (29.9%), Customer Service (27.4%), Information Technology (26.6%), Self-Employment (26.1%), and Administrative (26.1%). All but Self-Employment are amongst the top 10 occupational goals by Standard Occupational Code (SOC) in consumer employment plans in the MRCIS Case Management System. The high interest amongst consumers in Self-Employment may be a function of the economy driving more people to go into self-employment.

5. Overall, the majority of MRC consumers believe that MRC services are addressing all or most of their needs. 77.9% of consumers feel that MRC services are at least somewhat effective in

meeting their vocational service needs. Many of those who feel MRC services are not meeting their needs indicate they have difficulty maintaining contact with their counselor.

6. Many consumers expressed strong praise and gratitude for the hard work and support provided by MRC and its counseling staff. A need raised by consumers included better contact with their counselor and more information about available services and MRC procedures. Some consumers may not have a complete understanding of what MRC can and cannot do for them

7. Only about one-third of consumers indicated that they are aware of the Independent Living Center in their area. Individuals with psychological disabilities and those in the South District tended to be less aware of ILCs compared to consumers with other types of disabilities.

8. Transportation continues to be an area of great need for MRC consumers. The most important and needed transportation services and options listed by consumers are the Donated Vehicle Program (16.6%), public transportation (14.5%), driver's education and training (11.6%), information about transportation options (8.5%), and the Transportation Access Pass (8.5%).

9. Nearly 30% of consumers find transportation to be a potential barrier to obtaining employment. Common reasons for how transportation is a barrier include inability to access jobs via public transportation, the cost of transportation, lack of access to a vehicle, lack of a driver's license, and reliability and the time required to travel via public transit or para-transit

10. The most important and needed Community Living services indicated by responding consumers were affordable, accessible housing (67.8%), legal services (52.9%), recreational services (41.5%), home modification (37.4%), home care (28.5%), and assistive technology (27.8%)

11. Approximately 56.4% of MRC consumers indicated that MRC's services were somewhat or extremely helpful in helping them to maintain independence in the community. Many consumers reflected how MRC's assistance has been tremendously helpful to them. Many consumers, however, were not aware of some or all of the CL services provided by MRC. Others indicated they do not require CL services.

12. Finding affordable and accessible housing remains a challenge for many consumers due to continued economic difficulties and the high cost of living in Massachusetts. The Independent Living Centers may be able to assist consumers in this area, and counselors may be able to refer consumers to other resources as well

13. A total of 22.8% of consumers feel they require additional services and supports. These services include job placement and job training, financial assistance, transportation, affordable and accessible housing, assistive technology, and services and supports from other state agencies.

14. The most important single service that consumers are receiving includes assistance with college education, job placement and job search services, job training, vocational counseling and guidance, assistive technology, and assistance with obtaining supplies for school and work.

Conclusion and Recommendations

For the third year in a row, MRC successfully completed the needs assessment survey electronically using a web-based survey instrument. In addition, MRC piloted using consumer focus groups to enhance the needs assessment. Together, the pilot focus group, the Needs Assessment survey, and analysis of overall key facts, trends, and demographics have identified the needs of individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts and the services of primary importance to active VR consumers. The data included here will be considered in agency policy on the development of new programs as well as changes to current programs to better serve consumers. In addition, findings from this report will be incorporated into MRC's State Planning process and Strategic Planning documents and procedures. The findings will also be shared with MRC Senior Management, the Statewide Rehabilitation Council, VR staff, other key stakeholders, and will be disseminated through MRC's website.

The results of the 2012 Needs Assessment demonstrate that a majority of MRC consumers require multiple vocational rehabilitation, transportation, and community living services and supports to assist them in reaching their vocational and independent living goals. It remains clear that the slow economy and the high cost of living in Massachusetts continue to have a significant impact on many consumers. The following services were identified by MRC Consumers as most important and needed services:

Vocational/Career Counseling

Job Placement

Ongoing Supports to Assist Maintain Employment / Supported Employment

Benefits Planning

On-The-Job Training and Job Coaching

Education and Job Training/Tuition Assistance

Donated Vehicle Program

Assistance with Information on Transportation and Public Transit

Assistance with Affordable and Accessible Housing

Legal Assistance

Assistive Technology/Home Modifications

The majority of consumers indicate that MRC is providing services that are meeting their vocational needs and assisting them with maintaining their independence in the community. Many consumers expressed strong praise and gratitude for the hard work and support provided by MRC and its staff to assist them towards their goals. Common concerns and frustrations raised by consumers included problems maintaining contact with their counselor, lack of information about available services, especially MRC Community Living Services, difficulty obtaining and financing housing, transportation, and other important needs, and consumers have been affected by the overall economy. It is also evident there may be a level of misunderstanding amongst some consumers over what MRC can and cannot do for them.

Through the needs assessment, MRC has identified Asian and Pacific Islanders as being slightly underserved by MRC's Vocational Rehabilitation program compared to their proportion in the overall state population. It is important to note that proportionally Asians have been the fastest growing group amongst all ethnic and racial groups served by MRC's VR program over the last 10 years. This is also true in the state's general population.

Finally, MRC has seen an increase in the proportion of VR consumers served with psychiatric disabilities and with learning disabilities, including ADHD over the past ten years

Actions Taken from Last Year's Needs Assessment through MRC's State Plan and Strategic Planning Processes:

In the past year, MRC has undertaken a number of steps to address the recommendations and findings from the 2011 Needs Assessment. These include the following:

Incorporation of findings into MRC's Strategic Planning process:

MRC recently completed a comprehensive agency strategic plan as part of its quality assurance system activities. The findings of the 2011 Needs Assessment were incorporated, along with other information and data from other reports, into the strategic planning process.

Efforts to Increase Collection of valid email addresses for VR consumers:

MRC prominently emphasized the importance of collecting valid consumer email addresses in recent trainings for the recent rollout of the web-based MRCIS Case Management System. In addition, this has also been emphasized in meetings to MRC managers. This focus seems to be working, as the proportion of actively served consumers with an email address in the system increased by 5.8% over the past year.

Extension of Donated Vehicle Program through FFY2013

Based on the high demand and the demonstrated impact of the program, MRC has utilized re-allotment funding to extend the Donated Vehicle Program through Good News Garage through the end of FFY2013 (September 30, 2013)

Marketing Initiatives and Consumer Orientation Video to provide better information on services

MRC has undertaken an agency-wide marketing initiative to provide updated and more consistent and comprehensive information on the agency's services using a "One MRC" philosophy intended to break down the barriers between the agency's three divisions. Specific elements of this initiative include a new logo, tagline, and informational brochures, and development of a uniform consumer orientation video for use by VR area offices. The video is currently under development and includes additional emphasis on the consumer's role and the consumer handbook to increase consumer awareness of what MRC can and cannot do for them. The consumer handbook is also being updated and will be posted on the agency's websites. These efforts are scheduled for completion in FY2013.

Increase Consumer Awareness of Transportation Options Available to Them:

MRC is currently in the process of developing two fact sheets to assist consumers in understanding some transportation options available to them. One describes the new eligibility process for the MBTA's The Ride services. The other will describe the process/procedure to obtain/apply for a Transportation Access Pass (TAP). Once completed, these will be posted on MRC's website, distributed to area offices, and provided to the Training Department for use in future staff trainings. MRC has also submitted a proposal to EHS for a transportation planning/travel training initiative to assist MRC consumers with transportation.

Continue to Revise the Needs Assessment Survey and Process:

MRC revised the Needs Assessment Survey and process based on input from the Statewide Rehabilitation Council Needs Assessment Subcommittee and a review of best practices from other states. Several additional questions were added to the survey and additional data was added into the report. MRC also piloted a focus group to gather information from consumers asking similar questions to the Needs Assessment.

Efforts to enhance extended support services to employed consumers

MRC has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Developmental Services to identify day habilitation individuals and provide transition community based services to achieve supported employment outcomes. MRC will fund these individuals' employment initially through supported employment funding, with DDS agreeing to use their state dollars to provide the long term supports that these individuals would need to maintain their employment. In addition, MRC continues to operate the Partnership Plus Advantage program which provides extended supports to employed consumers receiving SSI and/or SSDI in collaboration with community rehabilitation programs with the goal of reducing recidivism among VR consumers.

Collaboration with Community Rehabilitation Programs and the Statewide Workforce Investment System: As described above, MRC has collaborated with Community Rehabilitation Programs through the Partnership Plus Advantage Program. MRC also does an annual survey of Community Rehabilitation Programs to assess the need to improve these programs within Massachusetts and these findings are factored into the recommendations of the Needs Assessment. In terms of the Workforce Investment System, MRC has a presence at the Massachusetts career centers; the MRC Commissioner serves on the State Workforce Investment

Board (SWIB), and each Commission area director has a formal relationship with at least one career center. In addition, many area directors are on local workforce investment boards. MRC VR counseling staff make frequent visits and often conduct interviews at local career centers.

Suggested Alternatives:

Utilize findings to promote program development within the agency: The consumer needs data and trends should continue to be considered by agency management both in terms of long range resource planning activities and future program development activities. Some program and policy recommendations that should be considered include:

Continue to incorporate findings in the State Plan and in MRC's Strategic Planning and Performance Management initiatives: MRC incorporated findings from the 2011 Needs Assessment in its State Plan. MRC's strategic planning process, and other quality assurance activities. It is recommended that MRC continue to follow this procedure with this year's report and all future needs assessment. This will enhance MRC's performance management and quality assurance activities.

Consider making the Donated Car Program a permanent program: The Donated Car Program currently operated in partnership with Good News Garage was the number one ranked transportation need specified by consumers. As mentioned before, the program has been extended through FFY2013. The program has been very successful over the past several years in assisting consumers in obtaining transportation to assist them with going to work. Consumers receive a donated vehicle that is repaired and inspected for safety and receive training on how to maintain and register a vehicle. Consumers must have the resources to register, insure, and maintain the vehicle.

Better Information on Services: Many consumers noted they were not aware of some of the community living supports and services provided by MRC. In addition, consumer responses also indicated that some consumers do not fully understand what MRC can and cannot do for them. The current marketing initiatives being undertaken by MRC to improve communication between MRC's divisions have included efforts to better inform VR consumers about CL services which may assist them in obtaining employment and maintain independence in the community, including development of a uniform, statewide orientation video for potential consumers to better educate them on what MRC can do for them. It is recommended that MRC continue to look at ways to provide better and more comprehensive information about services, including enhancing the Community Living section of the consumer manual, training staff both on what other internal MRC services that are available to consumers, and what external resources and agencies MRC counselors can refer consumers to. This will assist in setting realistic expectations and to better inform potential consumers if they are at the right door.

Increased Utilization of Benefits Planning: Once again, Benefits Planning was one of the top five service needs identified by MRC consumers. Many consumers worry about the impact employment may have on their public benefits. MRC has also seen an increase in the number of consumers receiving SSI and/or SSDI benefits at application. MRC should study ways to

improve collaboration between VR offices and MRC's Project Impact benefits planning program to better assist consumers with this need.

Improve Communication and Collaboration with Independent Living Centers: Given that only 33% of consumers are aware of the ILC in their area, MRC should continue to improve referrals and collaboration between VR offices and the ILCs. Independent Living Centers (ILCs) are important partners to MRC who can provide additional peer-driven supports to MRC consumers to assist them in their efforts to obtain employment and maintain independence in the community. Not only was this evident in the report, but also through the consumer focus group. The ILCs can be used as a conduit to assist consumers with soft skills development which will assist them in their efforts to both gain and maintain employment. The ILCs can also assist consumers in obtaining housing, which was one of the most cited community living needs identified by consumers. Also, ILCs may be able to assist with legal advice and budgeting. A task force or workgroup could be set up to assist with this process. MRC should also consider collaborating with ILCs on joint orientations, open houses, and other events to improve awareness of the ILCs.

Continue to Increase Consumer Awareness of Transportation Options such as the Transportation Access Pass (TAP) Program

This year's Needs Assessment has once again demonstrated that transportation continues to remain a significant need of many MRC consumers. In addition to some of the other ideas and recommendations, one way for MRC to better assist its consumers is to promote and increase awareness of the Commonwealth's Transportation Access Pass (TAP) program. This program allows individuals with disabilities to utilize public transportation from the MBTA and other regional transit authorities across the state at a greatly reduced rate. It appears many consumers are not aware of this program which could significantly reduce their transportation costs. MRC should consider developing fact sheets for this program and others such as The Ride's Eligibility Center that can be handed out to consumers, putting a link to these programs on its website and incorporate these into trainings and informational materials. Other informational materials and training can also be developed to assist consumers in learning about other available resources including local Councils on Aging. In addition, MRC should consider possible collaboration with MassRides, the EOHHS Human Services Transportation (HST) Office, and other organizations which might be able to assist consumers with transportation.

Consider developing travel planning and travel training services within MRC or in partnership with EOHHS if future resources are available.

MRC recently submitted a proposal to EOHHS to start a travel planning/travel training initiative to assist consumers with transportation issues. MRC should follow up on this proposal and should research the possibility of developing an internal travel training and planning service if future financial resources are available. One of the areas that should be researched is how this potential service could assist consumers in accessing jobs in suburban areas or other areas which have less transportation access.

Attempt to Increase the Number of Vendors for Driver's Education and Training the Next Time the Procurement is Opened

Given the notable increase in consumers indicating they need driver's education services in the survey results and open-ended responses, MRC should research the next time the Adaptive Driver Evaluation and Training Procurement will be opened for new vendors, and at that time should consider attempting to increase the number of qualified vendors under the RFR to assist with improving driver's education and adaptive evaluation services to consumers.

Research Efforts to Assist Parents of Transition Youth in Developing a Clear Understanding of What to Expect from VR

Given the recent increase in the number of youth consumers coming to MRC for services, MRC should consider researching efforts the agency could undertake to ensure that youth with disabilities who are referred to MRC's VR program, as well as their families, develop a full and clear understanding of the VR process and their roles.

Continue to Focus on collecting valid email addresses for VR consumers: MRC should continue to improve its efforts to collect and record valid email addresses in the MRCIS system. While the proportion of consumers with email addresses did increase notably from 2011, it was noted that there was notable variation between some area offices in terms of the proportion of consumers in the office with an email address in the MRCIS system. In addition, as job search processes become more electronic, it is increasingly important that consumers have a valid and appropriate email address to apply for positions online and communicate with employers. A certain percentage of MRC consumers may not have an email address when they begin services. In these situations it is important for MRC counselors to assist the individual with setting up a free email account such as Gmail or Hotmail. It is also very likely that many consumers have active email accounts, but this information is not being recorded. This will benefit consumers in improving their ability to find competitive employment as well as assist counselors in maintaining regular contact with their consumers. This will also assist in improving quality of data stored in MRCIS, leading to improved communication with consumers and facilitating higher response rates to electronic surveys. Development of staff training on email addresses and electronic communication with consumers should be considered to assist with this process.

Continue Outreach to Communities of Ethnic and Diverse Backgrounds on Vocational Rehabilitation and other MRC service offerings, especially in the Asian Community:

MRC has made a commitment to outreach to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are also ethnic and cultural minorities by hiring bilingual staff to outreach more effectively to those communities, through outreach to local community agencies and organizations, especially those that serve ethnic and culturally minorities, and other methods. MRC should continue these outreach efforts to ethnic and cultural minorities, especially to the Asian community, which has been identified as slightly underserved. In addition, it is recommended that MRC continue its efforts through its marketing initiative to reach out to the Asian community and other minority communities through translation of key MRC materials into multiple languages. Information on language prevalence has been provided to MRC's marketing

committee. Finally, MRC should continue to conduct statewide Bilingual/Bicultural vocational rehabilitation counselor group meetings on a regular basis and develop trainings on outreach to minority groups as needed.

Continue to Utilize Needs Assessment results to inform future studies/analysis: The Needs Assessment process has resulted in interesting findings worthy of further study. The survey suggest that additional studies and research about the impact of various VR services on employment outcomes, and variations in VR needs among different populations such as transition-aged youth, ethnic/racial minorities, older job seekers, and disability type may be useful to the agency in finding ways to better meet the needs all of its consumers. MRC should examine ways to increase utilization of career and skills assessment instruments such as Career Scope and PICS. In addition, the agency should consider studying ways it can better assist consumers in finding transportation assistance and affordable housing through referral and collaboration with other organizations and agencies. MRC should also consider researching underemployment of individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts and how its services can assist consumers in obtaining adequate employment which meets their needs. Finally, the findings of the Needs Assessment should also continue to be incorporated into and compared with other evaluations and reports.

Continue to further refine the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment process to reach out to additional consumers and to compare results over multiple years: In collaboration with the SRC Needs Assessment Subcommittee, the agency should continue to consider additional efforts to reach out to more consumers to identify their needs, especially in underserved and un-served populations. MRC should work with the Subcommittee to analyze the outcomes from the pilot focus group and determine whether to expand the pilot in 2013. A workshop or focus group at the annual consumer conference should be conducted to reach out to additional consumers. Consumer needs are a dynamic, moving target, and as new policies and new priorities are established, consumer needs will continue to evolve. The agency should also consider conducting a multi-year analysis of consumer needs. This could be done through examining data from past Needs Assessments, especially now that a baseline has been established administering the survey electronically. It is also recommended that MRC work with the Subcommittee to discuss how to enhance dissemination of the Needs Assessment Report to all stakeholders.

Develop a Task Force to Review Communication Issues with Consumers: The survey findings suggest counselors are having difficulty maintaining contact with some consumers based on the increased number of consumers in the MRC VR program over the past several years. This is also evident when looking at the closure reasons in for consumers closed unsuccessfully from the VR program. A task force of VR staff should be created to further review this issue and develop strategies to assist counselors in maintaining regular communication with consumers on their caseload. The recently completed study on Status 28 unsuccessful closures which is being reviewed with MRC Management by MRC's Budget Committee may also provide some suggestions and recommendations which may assist in this area.

Develop workshops for consumers on conducting an electronic job search and maintaining their online identity: The electronic job search process has become much more complicated in recent years with the launching of several new job search sites and the introduction of social

networking sites in the job search process. For example, there are now job sites dedicated to specific industries, or certain types of positions such as management or executive positions. Consumers who do not know how to navigate these sites will miss out on many job opportunities or waste time targeting the wrong opportunities. Some Career Centers have begun to offer workshops on using electronic and social media in the job search process, and our consumers could certainly benefit from a similar program provided within the VR office. The proposed workshop would include tips on managing one's online identity (e.g. creating a professional email account and scanning social networking pages for any material that could be misinterpreted by an employer); tips for creating resumes that can be cut and pasted into online job applications; use of professional networking sites such as LinkedIn; and guidance on navigating the multitude of job search sites which exist. MRC could also refer consumers to workshops in this area being offered at local libraries or Career Centers.

Continue to revise the survey instrument: The survey itself should be continuously re-evaluated with the assistance of the SRC Needs Assessment Committee to ensure that we are capturing the appropriate data and that the instrument is best designed to capture the needs of MRC consumers. This process has been successful over the past two years and should be continued as part of a continuous improvement process. As part of this process; MRC should consider adding a question or questions to the survey on the consumer's involvement in the development of their IPE and/or the effectiveness of their IPE in meeting their needs.

Conduct a study of how resource limitations impact service provision: In this year and past years' Needs Assessment surveys, consumers expressed frustration with the waiting time for services, the need for more information about services offered, and difficulty getting in contact with their counselor. Given future uncertainty on funding resources due to economic concerns, ongoing budget concerns at the state and federal level, as well as the impact of Massachusetts's impending loss of a congressional district and possible federal budget sequestration triggers on funding, such a study could be useful at this time. This study would assist MRC management to better monitor the quality of services during times of financial need and would be useful in making decisions on how best to serve consumers during challenging times.

Increase utilization of Electronic Resources to Communicate with Consumers

There were a number of suggestions in responses to the survey and in the focus group that MRC should utilize more electronic methods to communicate with consumers. These findings combined with those from a marketing survey done of consumers several years ago indicate that many consumers would like MRC to communicate more electronically with them, through e-mails, text messages, social media, and other similar methods. Given that communication continues to become more electronic, to keep up with technology, it is recommended that in addition to existing letters and phone calls, MRC should consider way to increase electronic communication with consumers. This may also improve consumer to counselor communication and may potentially assist in reducing the number of consumers closed out unsuccessfully because they cannot be located. A series of staff trainings on electronic communication should be considered. This will become more important in the future as consumers are more and more versed in communicating electronically.

Develop/Utilize Job Readiness/Placement Checklist to assist with Job Matching

MRC should develop or find a job readiness/placement checklist to assist in matching consumers' interests and skills with potential occupational areas and job opportunities. This will assist MRC counselors and placement staff in better determining what direction to point consumers in to assist them in obtaining employment. This ultimately may lead to additional employment outcomes and more efficient services for some consumers. This could also be tied into the agency's efforts to work with the Federal Government and federal government contractors to place individuals with disabilities into employment with federal agencies and federal contractors. This could assist with identifying individuals to apply for positions within federal agencies, federal contractors, and for special programs such as the Federal Pathways Internship Program.

Continue to Evaluate and Research Web-Based Electronic Assessment and Training for Consumers to Assist in Obtaining Employment

As the world becomes more mobile and electronic, it becomes increasingly important that MRC assist consumers in preparing for employment by developing and refining skills in using technology. MRC has established a pilot project to utilize a web-based system called the Manpower Training and Development Center (TDC) for consumers to undergo industry-based assessment, evaluation, skills development, and job matching. Packages are provided for Microsoft Office programs and for specific occupations including administrative assistants, stock clerks, call centers, customer service representatives, amongst other job areas. MRC should evaluate the results of this program in terms of employment outcomes and its overall benefit to consumers and continue to research additional electronic and web-based assessment, training, and evaluation solutions to assist consumers with preparing for and obtaining employment.

Continue to Assist Community Rehabilitation Programs: It is recommended MRC continues its efforts to assist and improve community rehabilitation programs through support and financial assistance to providers in the conversion of sheltered employment to supported employment. MRC should continue its efforts to provide input on the training curriculum for the Continuing Education Program for Community Rehabilitation personnel through the Institute for Community Inclusion at University of Massachusetts/Boston and through the TACE Center in association with Assumption College. It is also recommended MRC continue its collaboration with Community Rehabilitation Programs through the Partnership Plus Advantage Program.

Continue Efforts to Collaborate with Other Components of the Workforce Investment System in Massachusetts to Serve the Needs of Individuals with Disabilities: MRC should continue its efforts to maintain a presence at the Massachusetts career centers and on State and Local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). It is recommended that the MRC's job placement specialists and other assigned VR staff continue to work closely with local career centers to provide high quality vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities seeking expanded employment opportunities and to make the career centers more responsive to the needs of individuals with disabilities including providing disability sensitivity training for career center staff. In addition, MRC should continue to collaborate with other elements of the workforce

investment system to seek out collaborative grant opportunities that will assist individuals with disabilities across Massachusetts.

Continue Efforts to Provide Quality Services to Individuals with Learning Disabilities: The MRC has seen an increase in individuals served with specific learning disabilities (LD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It is recommended that MRC continue to work closely with the SRC's LD/ADHD task force to enhance services for consumers with LD/ADHD.

Enhancements to MRC's Vocational Rehabilitation Data System to Allow Assessment of the Scope of Consumers with Aspergers: Based on the input from the subcommittee, it is recommended that MRC make enhancements to its VR case management system to allow collection of data on individuals served with Aspergers. This will allow MRC to be able to better identify the scope of individuals with disabilities with Aspergers in the VR program which will allow MRC to better assess these individuals' needs.

This screen was last updated on Aug 15 2013 11:02AM by Teresa Walsh

Attachment 4.11(b) Annual Estimates

- Identify the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services.
- Identify the number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds under:
 - Part B of Title I;
 - Part B of Title VI;
 - each priority category, if under an order of selection.
- Identify 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.

Annual Estimates of Individuals to be served and Costs of Services

(1) Number of Individuals in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Who Are Eligible For Services under This State Plan

Consistent estimates, based on U. S. Census Bureau data and other sources, find that the number of individuals in the Commonwealth who may be eligible for services under this State Plan on the basis of having a disability ranges between 250,000 and 300,000.

(2) Number of Such Individuals Who Will Receive Services with Funds Provided Under Part B of Title I of the Act and Part B of Title VI

It is estimated that the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission will provide services with funds provided under part B of Title I of the Act as follows.

a) Individuals to be provided services to determine eligibility: 9,000 b) Individuals to be provided services to determine order of selection priority assignment and vocational rehabilitation needs: 7,678 c) Individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services necessary to render them employable consistent with an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) and subsequent amendments: 6,174

d) Individuals with most significant disabilities to be provided vocational rehabilitation services necessary to render them employable consistent with an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) and subsequent amendments: 6,174 e) Individuals with significant disabilities to be provided vocational rehabilitation services necessary to render them employable consistent with an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) and subsequent amendments: 70

Individuals with disabilities to be provided vocational rehabilitation services necessary to render them employable consistent with an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) and subsequent amendments: 19

It is estimated that the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission will provide services under part B of Title VI of the Act to approximately 460 individuals.

(3) Costs of Services

It is estimated that the costs of services with funds provided under part B of Title I of the Act will be \$55,521.295 including Social Security Administration reimbursement. Consistent with order of selection, costs of services to individuals is estimated as follows (does not include administrative costs).

a) Individuals with most significant disabilities:

i) Assessment, counseling, guidance, and placement: \$35,913.909 ii) Other vocational rehabilitation services consistent with an IPE: \$14,275.559

b) Individuals with significant disabilities and individuals with disabilities:

i) Assessment and guidance and placement: \$225,000

It is estimated that the costs of services with funds provided under part B of Title VI of the Act will be \$474,000.

Category	Title I or Title VI	Estimated Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
			0	—
				—
				—
				—

				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
Totals		\$0	0	—

This screen was last updated on Jul 1 2013 11:08AM by Teresa Walsh

Attachment 4.11(c)(1) State Goals and Priorities

The goals and priorities are based on the comprehensive statewide assessment, on requirements related to the performance standards and indicators, and on other information about the state agency. (See section 101(a)(15)(C) of the Act.) This attachment should be updated when there are material changes in the information that require the description to be amended.

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

(1) Goals and Priorities in Carrying Out the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs

The Research and Development Unit of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, in cooperation with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), conducted a needs assessment during fiscal year 2013 to survey the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities.

Goals and priorities of the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment programs are established consistent with these identified needs. The State Plan sub-committee of the SRC has also identified many of these same issues and has made recommendations to the Commission as detailed in the SRC attachment 4.2 c.

(2) Goals and Priorities

The Commission establishes statistical performance goals in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs.

(3) Standards and Indicators

Commission performance as measured by the RSA Standards and Indicators (using the FFY 2012 data set that was recently submitted to RSA) is also utilized to establish goals and priorities of the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment programs.

Goal 2: Priorities for collaborative effort

Priorities established for the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs for the coming fiscal year continue to be in the areas of collaborative efforts (encouraged by the Rehabilitation Act mandates) and program service expansion to improve services to individuals with disabilities.

Collaborative effort priorities are as follows:

- Massachusetts career centers and other components of the workforce investment system;
- Community Rehabilitation Programs;
- Massachusetts Department of Developmental Disabilities; and
- Massachusetts Department Education / Special Education transition of students with disabilities

Goal 3: Program service expansion and improvement priorities

Program service expansion and improvement priorities are as follows:

Marketing Initiative;

On the job training and evaluations;

Adaptive Van for Driver Education and Training;

IT web based MRCIS and Hardware Initiative;

Car Donation Program;

ARRA and re-allotment funded Workforce Investment with Employment Specialists; and Vocational Rehabilitation; Counselors;

Youth Summer Internship Program; and

Vocational Testing-Job Matching Occupational Specific; and

Web-based Training Initiative.

In the area of policy and practice, the Commission intends to assess policy and practices and revise them as necessary to improve effectiveness and timeliness of services to individuals with most significant disabilities.

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Attachment 4.11(c)(3) Order of Selection

- Identify the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services.
- Identify the justification for the order.
- Identify the service and outcome goals.
- Identify the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
- Describe how individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities.

This agency is not implementing an Order of Selection.

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Attachment 4.11(c)(4) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds

Specify the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under section 622 of the Act for the provision of supported employment services.

The Title VI Part B funds will be distributed consistent with Title VI, Part B requirements with the notation that rates, fees, and expenditures are subject to applicable Commonwealth of Massachusetts statutory, regulatory, and related requirements governing purchases of services and goods. Such parameters of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts govern, amongst other things, methods of procurement. Further, all providers of supported employment services need to qualify through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' inter-agency contractual process. The Commission and the Commonwealth utilizes procurement methods which, to the maximum extent possible, facilitate the provision of services and affords individuals meaningful choices among the entities (providers) that provide the services.

The Statewide Employment Services Department will establish the consumer need for this service on a fiscal year basis and will then fund services for those consumers in that specific geographic location. In FY'13 the SES has established the following need areas and funding levels. We are anticipating similar need areas for FY'14:

Area Disability Type Funding of Clients served

Greater Boston /South District

TIB

MR

MH

PD

ASP

LD/ADHD

\$227,520 221

Western District

TBI

MH

MR

PD

ASP

LD/ADHD

\$142,000 101

Northeast District

TBI

MH

MR

PD

ASP

LD/ADHD

\$104,480 138

Statewide

TBI

MR

MH

PD

ASP

LD/ADHD

\$474,000 460

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Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies

This attachment should include 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 vocational rehabilitation and the supported employment programs. (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Act and Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)).

Describe the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

Strategies for Goals and Priorities

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, in cooperation with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), conducted a needs assessment during fiscal year 2012 to survey the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state. Goals and priorities of the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment programs are established consistent with the needs and trends identified and include the following:

Outreach activities to identify and serve individuals with the most significant disabilities

Commission activities include outreach to community and state agencies, schools, other public institutions, and the general public by contact and presentation by MRC local office, district and administrative staff, printed brochures and agency consumer conferences.

The MRC Supported Employment Program receives direct referrals from twenty five (25) MRC VR offices, Forty four (44) community rehabilitation providers, links with the local school system for transitioning youth and other state agencies such as the Department of Mental Retardation and the Department of Mental Health especially through its clubhouse programs.

Identify how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process; and describe how assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis.

The Easter Seals Program of Adaptive Assistance

For the purposes of this program adaptive assistance is defined to be devices, aids, and enhancements for the elimination of barriers encountered by individuals with disabilities, primarily individuals with the most significant disabilities. Adaptive assistance is defined as services that either 1) supplement or enhance functions of the individual or 2) that impact on the environment through environmental changes, e.g., workshop modifications. Rehabilitation technology specialists may prescribe both types of rehabilitation technology services in order to create and/or maximize employment opportunities for the individual with a disability. The

rehabilitation technology services are provided to lead to and/or expand vocational rehabilitation and employment opportunities.

Persons served under this program were applicants or clients of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Target population is individuals with the most significant disabilities for whom rehabilitation technology services are being considered as potentially eliminating barriers to vocational rehabilitation and/or enhancing vocational rehabilitation and employment opportunities. Population includes:

- 1) Applicants undergoing evaluation of vocational rehabilitation potential, especially when the disabling condition of the individual is of such a nature and severity that rehabilitation technology services could result in a determination of ineligibility;
- 2) Eligible vocational rehabilitation clients for whom rehabilitation technology is being considered to assist the client to attain intermediate objectives and long-range rehabilitation goals; and
- 3) Eligible employed individuals to eliminate barriers to and/or enhance capacities for successful job performance.

Adaptive assistance evaluations, training, and consultations for individuals with disabilities served by the vocational rehabilitation program were:

- 1) Assessments of functional capacities of individuals with disabilities to include determinations of if and how the provision of rehabilitation technology services is likely to affect the capacity of the individual to perform successfully in competitive employment and/or enhance opportunities for the development of capacities for competitive employment;
- 2) Recommendations of specific rehabilitation technology for individuals with disabilities to include descriptions of related barriers to be eliminated and descriptions of functional capacities to be attained;
- 3) Rehabilitation technology training to affect the capacity of the individual with a disability to utilize specific assistive technology devices (equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities) and thus perform successfully in competitive employment and/or enhance opportunities for the development of capacities for competitive employment; and
- 4) Consultations to be provided to Commission staff to address the elimination of disability-related barriers, improvement of opportunities for competitive employment, and the development of functional capacities of individuals.

Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities; and what outreach

procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

Strategies to Outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities:

MRC has made a commitment to outreach to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are also ethnic and cultural minorities by hiring bilingual staff to outreach more effectively to those communities and by the expectation that directors from local area offices are involved in outreach to local community agencies and organizations, especially those that serve ethnic and culturally minorities.

MRC has an ongoing statewide Bilingual/Bicultural vocational rehabilitation counselor group who meet on a regular basis to: discuss and share resources on how to outreach to and serve cultural and ethnic minorities, develop new or translate existing agency forms and brochures, and develop and conduct, in collaboration with the Commission's staff development unit, training programs for local and district offices.

If applicable, identify plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the state.

Establishing, developing or improving community rehabilitation programs:

Commission efforts to assist and improve community rehabilitation programs include support and financial assistance to providers in the conversion of sheltered employment to supported employment.

MRC is represented on the Region 1 Advisory board of the New England Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program for Community Rehabilitation personnel through the Institute for Community Inclusion at University of Massachusetts/Boston and provides input on the development of the training curriculum.

The Commission also works with the Massachusetts Council of Human Resource providers facilitating provider forums to identify program gaps and other needs.

Describe strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators.

Strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators

MRC Research and Development Department staff conducts training with agency managers from the VR and Supported Employment Programs at agency management conferences, district and local area offices on the standards and indicators, what they mean, how they are derived from agency statistics and how they impact on agency performance. The Commission also provides automated reports on line for managers for use to educate staff and develop strategies for correcting performance in these areas.

Describe strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

Strategies for assisting other components of the workforce investment system

The Commission VR Program has a presence at the Massachusetts career centers; the MRC Commissioner serves on the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), and each Commission area director has a formal relationship with at least one career center. In addition, many area directors are on local workforce investment boards. Commission VR counseling staff make frequent visits and often conduct interviews at the local career center

The Commission job placement specialists and other assigned Commission staff work closely with local career centers to provide high quality vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities seeking expanded employment opportunities and to make the career centers more responsive to the needs of individuals with disabilities including providing disability sensitivity training for career center staff.

Describe how the agency's strategies will be used to:

- achieve goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1);
- support innovation and expansion activities; and
- overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the state Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the state Supported Employment Services Program.

Describe how the agency's strategies will be used to:

- achieve goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1);
- support innovation and expansion activities; and
- overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the state Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the state Supported Employment Services Program.

Strategies for Innovation and Expansion:

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission reserves and uses a portion of the funds allotted to the Commission under section 110 of the Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this State Plan, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities. Also to be included under this section is the MRC Plan for Economic Stimulus Resources funded through the VR ARRA Economic Stimulus Project Plan.

Consistent with the findings of statewide assessment and goals and priorities identified in conjunction with the State Rehabilitation Council, the Commission funds programs to address the needs of individuals with disabilities, primarily individuals with the most significant disabilities. Needs include:

- 1) Marketing Initiative
- 2) On the job training and on the job evaluations
- 3) IT web-based MRCIS and Hardware Initiative
- 4) Car Donation Program
- 5) Adaptive Van Driver Evaluation and Training
- 6) ARRA- and re-allotment funded Workforce Investment with Employment Service Specialists and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors
- 7) Summer Youth Internships
- 8) Vocational Testing-Job Matching Occupational Specific Web-Based Training Initiative

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Attachment 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) Goals

1. Clearly identify all VR program goals consistent with the goals described in the FY 2012 Attachment 4.11(c)(1), including an evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals were achieved.

- Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

Evaluation and Reports of Progress

This attachment describes the results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program as well as the supported employment program.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Fiscal year 2012 goal achievement was as follows:

Referrals:

Goal: 13,500

Achieved: 19,519

Percent: 145%

Applicants:

Goal: 9,000

Achieved: 10,728

Percent: 119%

Acceptances

Goal: 7,678

Achieved: 10,253

Percent: 133%

IPE's

Goal: 6,183

Achieved: 7,036

Percent: 114%

Vocational Rehabilitations

Goal: 3,300

Achieved: 3,597

Percent: 109%

SD Rehabilitations:

Goal: 3,300

Achieved: 3,597

Percent: 109%

Served:

Goal: 33,254

Achieved: 32,996

Percent: 99%

Fiscal year 2013 goal achievement is anticipated as follows: (through 5/24/13)

Referrals:

Goal: 13,500

Estimate: 11,937

Percent: 88%

Applicants

Goal: 9,000

Estimate: 6,385

Percent: 71%

Acceptances

Goal: 7,687

Estimate: 6,174

Percent: 80%

IPE's

Goal: 6,183

Estimate: 4,288

Percent: 69%

Vocational Rehabilitations:

Goal: 3,300

Estimate: 2,152

Percent: 65%

SD Rehabilitations

Goal: 3,300

Estimate: 2,152

Percent: 65%

Served:

Goal: 32,976

Estimate: 31,260

Percent: 95%

An Identification of the Strategies That Contributed To Achieving the Goals

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Strategies are based on the results of reviews, the numbers of individuals who have successfully completed their rehabilitation programs, the numbers of individuals who are receiving vocational rehabilitation services, the level of fiscal year expenditures, the level of fiscal year obligations, and anticipated revenues.

MRC is not operating under an order of selection as VR funds are sufficient to provide vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible individuals.

Explanation of Factors That Impeded Achievement of Goals Identified In Attachment 4.11 (c) (1)

As of May, 2013, rehabilitations are behind where they were at this time last year. In November 2012, MRC rolled out a new web based caseload management system. Adjustment to the new caseload system has probably contributed to lower statistics at least initially but hopefully as staff becomes more accustomed the number of rehabilitations will increase..

The economy continues to contract however leading to more cuts in state and local services. Because of these cuts the Commission continues to experience increases in referrals for services. This increase challenges the capacity of agency staff to write enough plans and successfully close enough cases as successful rehabilitations to meet its goals for this year. With RSA re-allotment monies and the use of ARRA funds, the agency was able to hire additional staff last year and to build the infrastructure to serve the increased number of referrals. At this time the Commission has determined that funds are sufficient to provide vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible individuals and all priority categories are open.

2. Identify all supported employment program goals consistent with the goals described in Attachment 4.11(c)(4), including an evaluation of the extent to which the supported employment program goals were achieved.

- Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

Supported Employment Program

Fiscal year 2013 goal achievement is anticipated as follows:

Referrals:

Goal: 228

Estimate: 286

Percent:

125%

Applicants:

Goal: 224

Estimate: 210

Percent: 94%

Acceptances:

Goal: 232

Estimate: 221

Percent: 95%

IPE's:

Goal: 188

Estimate: 191

Percent: 102%

Vocational Rehabilitations:

Goal: 88

Estimate: 91

Percent: 103%

S D Rehabilitations

Goal: 88

Estimate: 91

Percent: 103%

Served:

Goal: 400

Estimate: 460

Percent: 115%

Supported Employment Program

Supported employment services for people with most significant disabilities are provided by an array public and private agencies utilizing a variety of descriptions, definitions, guidelines, and funding sources. Services may be fully state- supported, federally supported or benefit from a mix of funding sources. These variations have made it difficult to manage, plan and devise strategies for services or funding for employment services for people with most significant disabilities. This structure also did not allow agencies, providers and clients to effectively advocate for the development of new services or the expansion of existing ones or allow consumer choice to be built into the process.

Despite these differences, the goals of the services are generally the same, regardless of the population served.

At the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission the Title VI B program now is developed through continued collaborative planning, both programmatic and budgetary. With the assistance of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Division of Purchased Services, the Statewide Employment Services Department at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has been able to implement some of the most inclusive, consumer driven and performance reimbursement services in the history of the Title VI B program. These outcomes have included:

- A single definition of employment that all agencies use
- A directory of employment and related services by state agency
- Interagency funding of community based employment services (supported employment) that is performance reimbursed, and consumer driven, and allows a flexible mechanism for cost sharing supports among agencies

The Statewide Employment Services Department will establish the consumer need for this service on a fiscal year basis and will then fund services for those consumers in that specific geographic location.

3. Provide an Assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY 2012.

Performance on Standards and Indicators

The Provisions in the Rehabilitation Act for Vocational Rehabilitation Programs require the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to determine if each VR State Program (MRC) is complying with national evaluation standards and performance indicators. Indicators represent performance benchmarks upon which MRC is evaluated each federal fiscal year. (October – September). MRC conducted this analysis of the Standards & Indicators on the basis of the 2012 Federal Fiscal year to review the agency’s performance for that year.

To achieve successful performance on these standards state VR agencies must meet or exceed four of the six performance indicators in standard 1; including meeting or exceeding the performance levels for two of the three primary indicators.

The three primary indicators are as follows: 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5*

In FY 2012, MRC missed being successful in passing these performance standards by a small margin. Only 3 of 6 indicators overall, and 2 of 3 primary indicators were passed.

Standard & Indicator 1.1:

The number of individuals exiting the VR Program who achieved an employment outcome during the current performance period compared to the number of individuals who exit the VR after achieving an employment outcome during the previous performance period. The total number of rehabilitations for the current year must exceed the number for the previous year by at least 1.

- o RSA Standard: 3,478 FY’11

- o MRC Performance: 3,579 FY’12

Performance Summary 1.1: MRC passed this indicator with a gain of 119 successful closures over last year. The continuation of programs initially funded by ARRA and now funded by re-allotment monies, maintained a number of new counselors, job placement and marketing specialists and on-the-job training and other employment support programs. The constant influx of new consumers to MRC also contributed to an increase in the number of rehabilitations.

Standard & Indicator 1.2:

Of all individuals who exit the VR Program after receiving services, the percentage that are determined to have achieved an employment outcome.

- o RSA Standard: 55.8%

- o National Average: 55.0%

- o MRC Performance: 48.7% FY 2012

- 49.8% FY 2011

51.8% FY 2010

49.2% FY 2009

55.3% FY 2008

Performance Summary 1.2: At 48.7%, MRC did not pass RSA Performance Standard 1.2, being below the RSA Standard of 55.8%. This year's score is lower than scores for the previous four years. The number of cases closed unsuccessfully in status 28 has increased until it surpassed the number of successful closures. Efforts to improve performance on Standard 1.2 by increasing the number of 26 closures have been successful as seen in 1.1 above. However efforts to decrease the number of 28 closures have not been sufficiently effective. MRC should continue the policy of avoiding opening cases that might result in eventual 28's. Attention should be paid to inappropriate eligibilities, seeing to it that all eligible consumers are truly seeking employment. Counselor caseloads should be decreased to improve their abilities to stay in contact with consumers. MRC has initiated a comprehensive study of the issue, which will assist in the development of appropriate policy and procedures to address this issue.

Standards & Indicator 1.3: (Primary Indicator)

Of all individuals determined to have achieved an employment outcome, the percentages who exit VR program in competitive, self or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the state minimum wage.

o RSA Standard: 72.6%

o National Average: 95.4%

o MRC Performance: 99.9% FY 2012

97.4% FY 2011

98.9% FY 2010

97.0% FY 2009

97.6% FY 2008

Performance Summary Standard 1.3: MRC passed the RSA 1.3 Performance Standard and Primary Indicator, the overwhelming majority earning at least the state minimum wage which is \$8.00/hour. Performance remained at an almost universal level this year, a sign that counselors are making more appropriate matches between consumer's aspirations and jobs that compensate them at or above the minimum wage.

* Standards & Indicator 1.4 (Primary Indicator)

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

o RSA Standard: 62.4%

o National Average: 90.48%

o MRC Performance: 96.3% FY 2012

100% FY 2011

100% FY 2010

99.9% FY 2009

99.9% FY 2008

Performance Summary Standard 1.4: MRC passed the RSA 1.4 Performance Standard and Primary Indicator. MRC is changing its OOS status which will increase the number of non-significant disabilities being served. Nevertheless, MRC still assures competitive jobs earning at least the minimum wage to those with the most severe disabilities.

* Standard & Indicator 1.5: (Primary Indicator)

The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self or BEP employment, with earnings equivalent to the least the minimum wage, (\$12.63) as a ratio to the state's average hourly earnings (\$29.09) for all individuals in the state who are employed (derived from the BLS report: "State Average Annual Pay" for the most recent available year).

o RSA Standard: .52

o National Average: .536

o MRC Performance: .434 FY 2012

.440 FY 2011

.459 FY 2010

.466 FY 2009

.47 FY 2008

Performance Summary 1.5: MRC did not pass the RSA 1.5 Performance Standard, one of the Primary Indicators. There was a slight decrease from last year's score. Massachusetts is a high

per capita wage state, and the average consumer wage was only \$12.63 slightly lower than last year. Nationally, there has been a gradual decline in workers income and a concomitant increase in the CPI, reducing available income. Massachusetts is also the 8th worst state in the size of its income gap between rich and poor. In the last 15 years, inflation adjusted income among the lowest fifth,(in terms of income) of the Massachusetts population declined by -5.3% while among the highest fifth, income increased by 29.6%. As a result, Massachusetts, along with other high wage states, will have a difficult time passing this indicator. The availability of higher paying blue collar jobs, increased unionization, more progressive taxes and fair state and federal income policies will be needed to assure income equality in Massachusetts.

Standard & Indicator 1.6:

Of all individuals who exit the VR Program in competitive, self or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, 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.

o RSA Standard: 53.0%

o National Standard: 60.87%

o MRC Performance: 52.5% FY 2012

55.1% FY 2011

52.7% FY 2010

57.1% FY 2009

59.7% FY 2008

Performance Summary 1.6: MRC failed to pass the 1.6 Performance Standard by half of a percentage point. MRC's score (52.5%) was over 2 percentage points less than last year. There was some missing data on the measure of major source of income at closure, which may have contributed to the decrease in the denominator. The decline could also be associated with the fragile economy in Massachusetts and an increase in the number of applicants who had no previous work or who were on some type of public support. In 2010, Massachusetts had the highest proportion of adults with disabilities who received SSI or SSDI in the nation. In 2012, 45% of MRC's closed cases received either SSI or SSDI at some point. Between area offices the percent receiving public benefits ran from a low of 36.3% to a high of 68.3%, and differences were statistically significant. It will be important for counselors to make accurate assessments of a consumer's income from all sources, even if he or she is receiving public benefits. There may be substantial earned income even if a person receives SSDI or other public benefit.

Standards & Indicator 2.1:

Standard and Indicator 2.1 measures the service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all non-minority individuals with disabilities.

o RSA Standard: .80

o National Average: .967

o MRC Performance: .95FY 2012

.95 FY 2011

.97 FY 2010

.90 FY 2009

.92 FY 2008

Performance Summary Standard 2.1: MRC exceeded the RSA Performance Standard 2.1 again this year. The score was slightly lower than last year, but well above the standard for equality of service.

4. Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in FY 2012.

Use Of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion

1) Marketing Initiative

2) On the job training and on the job evaluations

3) IT web-based MRCIS and Hardware Initiative

4) Car Donation Program

5) Adaptive Van for Driver Evaluation and Training

6) ARRA/re-allotment funded Workforce Investment with Employment Service Specialists and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

7) Youth Summer Internship Program

8) Vocational Testing-Job Matching Occupational Specific Web-Based Training Initiative

Marketing Initiative

MRC is continuing to develop innovative marketing materials for use with employers and schools to promote job opportunities for people with disabilities.

MRC is partnering with the University of Massachusetts to design and regularly update new materials, which will be used by counselors and job placements specialists to build partnerships with local businesses and training centers.

On-the-job training and evaluation

- MRC is using ARRA/re-allotment funding on an On-The-Job Training Initiative (OJT) to rapidly develop individualized, employer and industry specific job training opportunities for individuals with disabilities by capitalizing on growth opportunities in the Massachusetts economy. The Commission hired 9 employment and job placement specialist using ARRA monies. This year, the Commission hired an additional 3 employment service specialists under re-allotment funds to work with employers to develop more OJT opportunities for Commission consumers.

- This public-private partnership between MRC and employers creates private industry job training opportunities for individuals with disabilities in high-growth industries, such as health care, transportation, manufacturing and customer services. The Commission has partnered with employers such as Bay state Health, Fallon Clinic, South Shore Mental Health Center, Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital and Ideal Global Solutions. The jobs created include licensed practical nurses, medical billing and coding positions, computer technicians, residential counselors and customer service representatives.

MRC has also partnered with AlliedBarton Security, Manpower, TJX and CVS to build long term employer relationships to develop more employment opportunities for MRC consumers.

IT web-based MRCIS and Hardware Initiative

With these federal funds, MRC has converted its vocational case management system to a web-based application, reducing inefficiencies and speeding application processing time for consumers seeking employment. Upgrading this infrastructure will allow job counseling staff working directly with consumers to have access to the agency's case management system from anywhere an internet connection is available. Case managers will also be able to work with more consumers with disabilities in their own communities to promote independence and employment. Replacing the existing paper file system will also allow for faster eligibility determinations, improve job training and placement timelines, and reduce administrative costs.

Car Donation Program

- MRC is continuing the Car Donation Program that was initially funded by ARRA, in partnership with the Good News Garage. This program matches donated vehicles to consumers

who need transportation to access employment when little or no public transit or other transportation is available,

- Training of consumers on how to maintain and register a vehicle is also provided. Clients must have a valid driver's license and have the resources to register, insure and operate the vehicle to participate in the program.
- To date, 229 MRC consumers across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have received donated vehicles and the vast majority of consumers have gained employment as a result of their transportation needs being addressed.

Adaptive Van for Driver Evaluation and Training

The Commission has acquired an adaptive van to be used with the MRC Driver Evaluation and Training Program. The van is being used to evaluate individuals with disabilities to determine the type of adaptive driving equipment required to assist them with driving and to provide driver training lessons and instruction to consumers on how to utilize adaptive equipment. The van has state of the art adaptive technology and is benefiting many consumers served by the Commission in helping them to go to work and live independently in the community.

ARRA/re-allotment funded Workforce Investment with Employment Service Specialists and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

- 18 new Vocational Rehabilitation counselors hired from ARRA funding to increase service capacity and increase job placements for consumers. Of these 18, 17 have been retained by the Commission and recruited into counseling positions vacated by retiring staff. 2VR counselors were hired through re-allotment monies.
- There has been an increase in successful employment outcomes and a significant reduction in overdue status cases since these employees were hired.
- 10 Employment Service Specialists and Job Placement Specialists were hired as permanent employees to increase job placements for consumers. Another 2 individuals were hired as temporary workers through re-allotment monies. These staff members work with consumers and with employers to develop programs and partnerships and identify job opportunities that will result in successful employment outcomes for consumers and helping to meet the recruitment needs of employers.
- 56 Paid Internships provided to Rehabilitation Counseling students as part of a strategy to reach out to VR counseling programs to recruit new, qualified counselors. 20 interns to date have been hired by the Commission as full time employees.

Youth Summer Internship Program

The Commission has developed a summer internship program for youths with disabilities in partnership with the State as a Model Employer Initiative. This program provides valuable work

experience and mentorship opportunities for participants. This program served 10 youths in 2009 and served 19 youths during 2010. The program served 30 youths during 2011 and 2012 is expected to serve an equal number in 2013. Students are placed in a variety of state agency worksites in the Boston, Worcester and Springfield areas.

Vocational Testing=Job Matching Occupation Specific Web-based Training Initiative

The Commission is developing a pilot project to secure occupational web-based training, skills development and job matching services for its consumers in:

1. Microsoft Office Suite (2003, 2007, 2010)

Microsoft Word, Excel and Power Point

2. Customer Service

3. Call Center

4. Administrative Assistant and Receptionist

5. Office and Clerical Support

6. Packing and Product Preparation

7. Shipping and Receiving

8. Materials Inspection

9. Preparation for Employment

10. Equipment Assembly

The pilot program has served 42 consumers to date with 2 individuals being placed in status 22.

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Attachment 6.3 Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

- Describe quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities
- Describe the timing of the transition to extended services

Attachment 6.3

RSA State Plan

Federal Fiscal Year 2008

Description of Quality, Scope and Extent of

Supported Employment Services

Preface

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts through its Human Services agencies and its secondary school special education programs, has been developing and expanding integrated work opportunities for individuals with disabilities, since 1978 because it became very evident that there was a vast number of people with disabilities for whom there were limited work options because of the nature and extent of support services they require in order to maintain employment. With the leadership of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Massachusetts human service agencies began to examine ways in which integrated work opportunities could be extended to persons with severe disabilities who need extensive support services to remain in the work setting as productive employees. Throughout the past 15 years, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Mental Retardation, the Commission for the Blind and the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing have been working together to shift and to share resources to create opportunities. The Department of Mental Health and the Department of Mental Retardation have shifted programs and funding to develop and expand long-term support services at integrated work sites. Through its provider contracts for EEP, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has set goals for conversion of sheltered work to supported employment and has worked with providers to develop more substantive support services that are long term and based on consumers' choices.

Several years ago, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services with the assistance of the Statewide Employment Services Department at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation commission organized a group "Strategic Alliances" whose plans included the development of a comprehensive employment system that would:

1. Increase the number of people with disabilities engaged in appropriate employment services.

2. Create a consistent definition and support services structure regardless of the agency through which the service is provided
3. Establish a contracting process and reimbursement mechanism for employment services, which would be guided by the same rules, regulations and guidelines regardless of the administering agency, and based on client choice.
4. Permit the evaluation of funding strategies for employment services through tracking, gap identification and service and budget advocacy.

There continues to be a very positive climate for the enhancement of this process in both the Administrative and Legislative branches of State government. The recent release of the joint initiative for Community Based Employment Services and redesign of the dollars allocated for Extended Employment supports this initiative.

Narrative

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has clearly come to understand this great void in employment opportunities for many individuals with the most significant disabilities and has made a firm commitment to fill this void. Title VI, B funded programs and services represent a crucial component in the Commonwealth's overall plan for supported employment. As several State agencies develop long-term, State funded supported employment services and programs; the Title IV B program is instrumental in bridging the gap between unemployment or under employment to competitive employment with long-term support services for several persons with disabilities.

In FY'07 the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has over 60 Qualified Community Rehabilitation Providers to offer Supported Employment services. These programs, located throughout the state, serve persons with an array of severe disabilities including autism, deaf/severely hearing impaired, severely physically disabled, long-term mentally ill, traumatic brain injured and dual diagnosed persons with mental retardation and long-term mental illness and multiply disabled individuals.

All Title VI B program participants who were enrolled in the supported employment program completed not more than 18 months of services funded by Title VI. All necessary long-term support services have been arranged to continue without use of Title I or Title VI B funding. Funding for extended long-term support services is available from several sources depending on the nature of the client's disability and the resources available to each service provider agency. Sources include:

IRS Section 44

United Cerebral Palsy Funding

Department of Mental Health

Department of Mental Retardation

Private Sector Business Natural Supports

Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Statewide Head Injury Program

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission State Revenue

Social Security Work Incentives

Natural Supports

Due to the vigorous emphasis on supported employment in Massachusetts, which has been spearheaded by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Statewide Employment Services Department a collaborative effort has resulted in funding for long-term support services.

In FY'07, a five year continuation for the Request for Qualification (RFQ) was reissued for Title VI B funded Supported Employment as well as other state agencies employment programs. This will allow the Commission to continue the following goals:

1. Strengthen existing quality programs and replace ineffective/inefficient programs with new ones. Seventy providers have qualified to date.
2. Focus Title VI B funding on under-served or un-served consumers such as those who are severely physically disabled, Aspergers Syndrome, Deaf or Brain Injured.
3. Establish a large statewide pool of programs interested in and able to provide Supported Employment Programs and services, including long-term supports.

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System Information

System information

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