

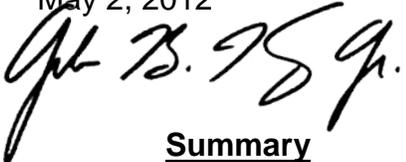


TO: The Honorable the Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: Kevin G. Smith 

SUBJECT: Amendment to the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation and Supplement for Supported Employment Services Program

DATE: May 2, 2012

AUTHORIZATION(S): 
Summary

Issue for Approval (Consent Agenda)

In accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1998, the Amendment to the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation and Supplement for Supported Employment Services Program, effective October 1, 2012, is presented for your approval.

Proposed Handling

This issue will come before the Board of Regents at its May 2012 meeting for approval.

Procedural History

Each year, the Board of Regents approves the Amendment to the State Plan that must be submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration by July 1.

Background Information

The Rehabilitation Act, as amended, requires that New York State prepare a State Plan that informs the public of the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services - Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) goals, priorities and performance in providing vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services to individuals with disabilities in New York State. This document, entitled State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Supplement for Supported Employment Services Program, Effective July 1, 2001, was previously submitted by ACCES-VR and approved by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

The Rehabilitation Act further requires that each state annually amend its approved State Plan in specific areas, as requested by RSA, through the submission of updated attachments. These required updates provide information relating to: the comprehensive system of personnel development; state assessments; estimates; goals and priorities; reports of progress; strategies; and innovation and expansion. The Amendment to the State Plan for 2012 consists of specific attachments for these topics and is based on the most recent guidance provided by RSA. For information on the current Amendment to the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Supplement for Supported Employment Services Program Federal Fiscal Year 2012 go to http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/adult_vocational_rehabilitation_services/state_plan/about.htm

ACCES-VR, in conjunction with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), jointly developed the Amendment to the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Supported Employment Services Program, Federal Fiscal Year 2013. ACCES-VR has updated the **Coordination with Education Officials: Attachment 4.8(b)(2)** to reflect the most current activities related to serving transition-age youth. In addition, the **State's Strategies and Use of Title I Funding for Innovation and Expansion Activities: Attachment 4.11(d)** was updated to describe how ACCES-VR plans to use a portion of Title I Funding to innovate and expand vocational rehabilitation services. There were no significant changes made to the other attachments.

RSA reviews and approves the submission of the State Plan amendments annually which is necessary by the State to ensure that its plan and supplement reflect the current administration of the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs. Funding for the state vocational rehabilitation program and supported employment program is appropriated upon approval of this State Plan Amendment.

Recommendation

VOTED: that the Amendment to the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Services, effective October 1, 2012, is approved.

Timetable for Implementation

Upon approval by the Regents of the State Plan, it will be submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration for review and approval, as required, prior to July 1, 2012.

Attachment

**Amendment to the State Plan for
Vocational Rehabilitation Services and
Supplement for
Supported Employment Services Program**

Federal Fiscal Year 2013

**New York State Education Department
The Office of Adult Career and Continuing
Education Services (ACCES)-Vocational
Rehabilitation**

Summary of Amendment to the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Supplement for Supported Employment Services Program Federal Fiscal Year 2013

ACCES-VR

The New York State Education Department is the designated state agency for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. The Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) is the designated state unit to provide services to individuals with disabilities (other than those who are legally blind). ACCES is comprised of three primary areas: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Independent Living, Adult Education and the Bureau of Proprietary School Supervision. The State Plan is focused on ACCES-VR.

State Plan Process

The Rehabilitation Act, as amended, requires that New York State (NYS) prepare a State Plan that informs the public of the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services–Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) goals, priorities and performance in providing VR and supported employment services to individuals with disabilities in NYS. This document, entitled State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Supplement for Supported Employment Services Program, Effective July 1, 2001, was previously submitted and approved by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The Rehabilitation Act further requires that each state annually amend its approved State Plan in specific areas, as requested by RSA, through the submission of specific updated attachments. The Amendment to the State Plan for 2013 consists of these specific attachments and is based on the most recent guidance provided by RSA. The Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2013 State Plan continues to be an amendment to the original document since the Workforce Investment Act has not yet been reauthorized.

ACCES-VR, in conjunction with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), jointly developed the Amendment to the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Supported Employment Services Program FFY 2013. ACCES-VR consulted with the SRC throughout the year on critical aspects of the State Plan development process, including the joint planning of the State Plan public meetings.

The SRC provided comments and advice on the content of the State Plan. The previous year's Amendment to the State Plan (FFY 2012) was used to solicit input and recommendations from the public on planned activities related to the vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities for the next year.

As part of the State Plan development, ACCES-VR solicited public comments from February 15, 2012 through March 16, 2012 regarding the State Plan amendments. Three public meetings were held, one each in Albany, Buffalo and Manhattan. The focus of the meetings was to identify how to increase employment outcomes for individuals receiving VR services and to give the public an opportunity to comment on NYS's implementation of the VR program. Prepared questions facilitated discussion from participants about their perspectives on VR services and supports that could better assist individuals to obtain and maintain quality employment.

Public Meetings

To notify and inform the public about the meetings on the State Plan, ACCES-VR emailed flyers that gave specific details on the State Plan public meetings, including the meeting dates, times and locations. The flyers were sent to consumers, stakeholders, community agencies, schools, Independent Living Centers and support groups. ACCES-VR also utilized the newsletters, faxes and the internal communication processes of several community rehabilitation providers and associations to advertise the public meetings.

ACCES-VR further advertised the public meetings through the ACCES-VR website and the public was able to provide written comments through the vrpolicy@mail.nysed.gov email box. In addition, a few participants at the State Plan public meetings handed in written testimony to the facilitators at the meetings.

The public meetings were designed to provide ample opportunities for participants to review and discuss their ideas about ACCES-VR's State Plan, policies, future direction and how the VR Program could better assist individuals to obtain and maintain quality employment. At each of the three meetings, ACCES-VR provided a brief presentation on the State Plan and provided data and information related to the key questions. ACCES-VR staff facilitated the discussion, but public participants remained free to offer comments or recommendations on any part of the State Plan and its process. There was also time reserved during each meeting for participants to provide testimony and make specific statements.

Approximately 140 individuals attended the public meetings: 31 in Albany, 75 in Buffalo and 34 in New York City. Of these, 79 were from community rehabilitation programs. About 15 individuals provided testimony. The testimony and recommendations received during the public comment period were reviewed and shared with ACCES-VR leadership and the SRC for consideration.

Amendment of the State Plan: Required Attachments

The following attachments describe ACCES-VR's plans, policies and activities in a number of required areas as part of this Amendment. The sections of the Amendment to the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Supplement for Supported Employment Services Program, FFY 2013 include:

Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; and Explanation for Rejection of Input or Recommendations: Attachment 4.2(c)

Summarizes the advice of the SRC on State Plan and policy development. ACCES-VR's responses to SRC are also included.

Coordination with Education Officials 4.8(b)(2)

Describes ACCES-VR's efforts to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school employment at the statewide and local levels.

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD): Attachment 4.10

Describes ACCES-VR's activities that ensure an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation professionals in conformance with its CSPD. The CSPD calls for ACCES-VR to utilize the highest national standard, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC), as the goal in recruitment and retention of counselors.

Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Costs of Service: Attachment 4.11(b)

ACCES-VR estimates that during FFY 2013, about 38,000 individuals with significant or most significant disabilities will become eligible for ACCES-VR services. This is a decrease from previous years.

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

This attachment indicates that ACCES-VR plans to continue to fund supported employment services utilizing Federal Title VI, Part B and other funds.

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

This attachment describes how ACCES-VR plans to use a portion of Title I Funding to innovate and expand VR services. This attachment was submitted for the 2012 Amendment to the State Plan based on results of the FFY 2011 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the subsequent changes to ACCES-VR goals and priorities. It has been further refined and resubmitted with the FFY 2013 State Plan.

Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities: Attachment 4.11(e)(2)

Describes ACCES-VR's progress in achieving the goals and priorities, as required by regulation and agreed to with the SRC.

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD): Attachment 4.10

ACCES-VR is committed to establishing and maintaining a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD), designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRCs).

Qualified Personnel Providing Vocational Rehabilitation Services

ACCES-VR relies on two systems to assess its qualified personnel needs. These systems are the New York State Education Department's (SED) Fiscal and Human Resources Information Management System and the VR Reporting System. ACCES-VR collects data from these systems to track information about its VRCs who meet CSPD requirements and the number of consumers served, and then uses the information to make trend data projections to assess staffing needs.

ACCES-VR hires VRCs who meet CSPD requirements to provide vocational rehabilitation services. ACCES-VR employs vocational rehabilitation counselor assistants (VRCAs) to perform a variety of paraprofessional tasks to support the VRCs in assisting individuals with disabilities to obtain or retain employment. The VRCAs interact with consumers and perform administrative tasks to facilitate service delivery. ACCES-VR does not employ any other type of rehabilitation staff, such as mobility instructors or rehabilitation teachers.

As of September 30, 2011, ACCES-VR had 327 VRCs. The data reflected an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation professionals as summarized in the following table:

Full-time Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs)	327
Full-time Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Assistants (VRCAs)	81
VRCs not meeting CSPD standards	21
ACCES-VR Consumers with Open Cases (Status 02-24)	54,359
Ratio of VRCs to Consumers	1: 166
Projected number of VRCs that ACCES-VR will need over the next five years based on individuals served and VRCs expected to retire or leave the agency.	58
Projected number of VRCAs that ACCES-VR will need over the next five years to fill positions based on VRCAs expected to retire or leave the agency.	56

Collecting and Analyzing Data

As discussed in **Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Costs of Service: Attachment 4.11(b)(1)**, ACCES-VR uses trend data projections to estimate

the number of individuals that will be found eligible for ACCES-VR services. Based on these projections, ACCES-VR determined that 58 new VRCs will be needed to serve its consumers over the next five years. The estimate is based on the anticipated number of individuals to be served, the number of VRCs and supervisory counseling staff age 50 or older with 25 years of service who will be eligible for retirement within the next five years and others who may leave the agency.

There are 81 FTE VRCA positions filled. It is estimated that ACCES-VR will need 56 new VRCAs over the next five years. The estimate is calculated based on 107 positions designated for VRCAs, the number of VRCAs age 50 or older with 25 years of service who will be eligible for retirement within the next five years and others who may leave the agency.

The number of consumers served decreased from 58,904 last year to 54,359 this year. With 4,545 fewer consumers served, 26 fewer VRCs were needed based on a ratio of VRC to consumer at 1:175. The projected number of VRCs needed in the next five years decreased from 100 last year to 58 this year. The anticipated need for VRCAs increased from 46 last year to 56 this year. The current level of counselors and counselor assistants allows us to adequately serve current numbers of eligible individuals.

Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) Accredited Programs

The Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) is the agency that provides accreditation to Master's programs in Rehabilitation Counselor Education at institutions of higher education. The CORE accredited programs in New York State (NYS) are: University at Buffalo – State University of New York (SUNY), Hofstra University and Hunter College – City University of New York (CUNY).

Overall, there was a 32 percent increase in student enrollment at NYS CORE programs from last year. In academic year 2010-2011, 239 students were enrolled in graduate programs in rehabilitation counseling, compared to 181 the previous year. Enrollment increased in each of the three CORE programs. The number of students identifying themselves as individuals with a disability or non-white, however, decreased 31 percent, from 147 last year to 112 this year.

ACCES-VR maintains a contact at each of these institutions of higher education and collects the following student data:

SUNY Buffalo offers a graduate program in rehabilitation counseling to students both on-campus and online. Student enrollment increased 77 percent, from 52 to 92 students from the previous year. The number of students that reported having a disability or being non-white increased 17 percent, from 23 to 27 students.

Hofstra University student enrollment increased 13 percent, from 45 to 51 students. The number of students that reported having a disability or being non-white remained the same as last year, 24 students.

CUNY Hunter College student enrollment increased 14 percent, from 84 to 96 students. The number of students that reported having a disability or being non-white decreased 39 percent, from 100 to 61 students.

Institutions of Higher Education (CORE) Student Total

	SUNY- Buffalo	Hunter	Hofstra	TOTAL
# of CORE Students	92	96	51	239
Students with a Disability	09	17	09	35
Students as non- white	18	44	15	77
Graduated in 2011	22	31	15	68

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

ACCES-VR launched several initiatives to attract professional rehabilitation counselors and graduate students to consider employment in NYS. These initiatives included college recruitment visits and counselor internships.

Recruitment and Outreach

ACCES-VR works with CORE programs in NYS and contiguous states to implement its recruitment plan to attract potential candidates from diverse backgrounds to consider employment at ACCES-VR. To maximize outreach efforts, ACCES-VR increased its use of technology to share information and maintain contact with schools. In 2011, recruitment visits focused on colleges and universities in and around NYS. The benefits of working in NYS were shared with Program Directors and students in graduate Rehabilitation Counseling programs. They were also advised of the internship opportunities and application process for taking the NYS Civil Service exam for VRCs.

Counselor Internships

An internship program was created to provide second-year graduate students an opportunity to perform their internship in one of the ACCES-VR field offices. This initiative allows students to complete their degree requirements while building valuable experience with the State VR program. The internship program is comprised of two components: a practicum and an internship. These are offered three times each year and recently graduated students can work in intern status while pursuing full time employment at ACCES-VR.

More than 160 students have participated in the internship program since 2006 with 25 VRCs hired. In 2011, ACCES-VR provided five practicum experiences and 29 internships, of which one was paid. When resources allow, paid internships are made available to students.

Plan to Support VRCs to Meet CSPD

Since NYS does not have State certification or licensure for VRCs, ACCES-VR has elected to use the national standard established by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). As a result of ACCES-VR's work with VRCs, its coordination with two of the CORE programs, retirements and staff changes, the number of counselors not meeting the national standard has been reduced to 21. By 2013, these counselors must be engaged in a training program to be completed by 2018.

The participation of VRCs in an educational program to meet the standard is monitored on an ongoing basis to evaluate compliance with SED personnel standards (cited below).

Personnel Standards: Highest Standard for the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

ACCES-VR employs VRCs who have, or are eligible to obtain, qualification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC). All VRCs are required to have:

- a current Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) certificate; or
- a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, including a supervised internship, from a CORE accredited program; or
- a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or Counseling and notice of eligibility to participate in the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) certificate examination.

VRCs considered for appointment to a "Manual Communication" or "Spanish Language" position are required to demonstrate proficiency in the manual sign

language or in the Spanish language. Proficiency must be at a level which will permit them to perform the duties of the position satisfactorily.

Personnel Standards: Civil Service Qualifications for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Assistant

ACCES-VR employs VRCAs to assist VRCs in the administrative, para-professional and routine communication tasks that enhance the vocational rehabilitation process. The VRCAs do not determine eligibility, develop the vocational goal, write the IPE, determine case closures nor do they provide VR services to consumers.

To be eligible for employment, VRCAs must meet the following qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree in vocational rehabilitation, social work, counseling, or psychology; or
- Bachelor's degree and one year of qualifying experience; or
- 60 semester college credit hours and two years of qualifying experience; or
- Four years of qualifying experience.

Qualifying experience: In order for experience to be considered qualifying, the primary responsibilities of a position must have involved professional or paraprofessional duties in one of the following areas:

Either

- A. providing direct services beyond routine personal care or supervision to physically, mentally or learning disabled adults or adolescents in a rehabilitation program or facility.

Or

- B. providing vocational or educational services to disabled adults or disabled adolescents in the areas of assessment, counseling, job coaching, guidance, placement or job development.

Staff Development

ACCES-VR implemented the In-Service training program to provide training and education opportunities for all VR staff to strengthen skills to enhance the delivery of quality services to consumers. Training is an important part of the development of qualified staff to meet the requirements of CSPD and to meet and maintain professional certification.

An annual training needs assessment is conducted to identify staff training needs and interests. With input from managers and the State Rehabilitation Council, a staff

training program is developed. The results of the needs assessment survey are also shared with the Region 2 Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE), which assists ACCES-VR in providing training to VR professionals.

In FFY 2011, ACCES-VR staff, including 289 CRCs, participated in 245 training opportunities. We anticipate exceeding this number of trainings in FFY 2012. ACCES-VR provided funds through an In-Service Training Grant to eight staff to pursue certificate, non-degree, undergraduate, graduate or post-graduate degree courses. ACCES-VR staff participated in the following training:

- **Assessment:** An Overview of Motivational Interviewing and Eligibility.

- **Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling:** Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE); National Rehabilitation Association (NRA); Addressing Potentially Dangerous Behaviors; Ethics Module 1; Ethical Principles in Action; Ethical Issues in Rehabilitation; Exploring Challenges and Solutions and Our Education System.

- **Job Placement/Employment:** New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP); Work Incentives Planning and Utilization For Benefits; NYS Division on Career Development and Transition; Social Security and Ticket to Work; Training Techniques in Employment Settings; Traumatic Brain Injury and Return to Work; Working with Consumers with Co-Existing Conditions; Working with Consumers with Personality Disorders; Transferable Skills; Skills for Today's Labor Market; Career Index: I, II and Initial Agreement and Partnership: Quality Care Pharmacy and Duane Reade.

- **Rehabilitation Technology:** Adirondack Assistive Technology Expo

- **Disability-Related Training:** NY Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS); Substance Use Disorder Technical Assistance Brief; Addiction, Relapse, and Recovery: Understanding the Process; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Diagnosis and Treatment; Traumatic Brain Injury Survivor's Insight; Understanding Mood Disorders; Hearing Loss & Cochlear Implants and Visual Acuity.

- **Policies and Procedures:** Case Management and Supported Employment.

- **Financial Procedures and Controls:** Financial Need and Supported Employment Information Directory (SEID).

- **Supported Employment - Supported Employment Training Initiative (SETI):** Counseling Skills for Direct Service Providers; Documentation and Record Keeping; Extended Services and Natural Supports; Ethical Issues in Job Placement and Supported Employment; Functional and Situational Assessment; Job Coach Training Overview; Job Retention and Career Development; Managing Challenging Behavior;

Orientation to Supported Employment; Supported Employment Program Management and Training Techniques in Employment Settings.

- **Other Training: (for Supervisory Staff)** - Supervisory Institute; Supervisory Orientation and NY State Rehabilitation Association (NYSRA); Leadership Development and Strategies for Supervision Success.

Procedures for Acquisition and Dissemination of Training

Training and education opportunities for VR staff are funded through the In-Service Training Grant. ACCES-VR collaborates with other State agencies and disability organizations to jointly develop or provide disability and/or systems trainings for staff. ACCES-VR also partners with TACE to increase staffs skills and enhance their knowledge. This partnership expands training opportunities for staff and gives ACCES-VR additional resources to maximize funding for trainings. Additionally, this partnership provides trainings for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors to earn continuing education credits to meet the Ethics certification requirements.

Other key partnerships include the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS); Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE), New York State Rehabilitation Association (NYSRA), New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services, Inc. (NYAPRS) and the New York State Independent Living Council (NYSILC).

Training is provided through a variety of modalities such as distance learning, video-conference, seminars, workshops, individual district office training, and attendance at local, regional and statewide training programs and conferences. ACCES-VR utilizes video-conferencing training as much as possible to facilitate training opportunities and to minimize costs. Consideration is given to the diversity of staff, skill levels, and experiences and needs when developing training programs.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

ACCES-VR ensures adequate services to applicants or eligible individuals with limited English proficiency or who use other modes of communication, such as sign language, by hiring staff able to communicate in other native languages or via other modes of communication, such as sign language. When such staff is not available, ACCES-VR obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes with applicants or eligible individuals. ACCES-VR contracts with outside agencies and individuals for interpreter or communication services, and uses only certified or State-approved interpreters for the deaf when sign language interpreter services are required in the provision of VR services.

Coordination with Personnel Development and Training under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Through its administration of vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs, ACCES-VR coordinates policy and services relating to transition services for students with disabilities from school to adult services and begins planning VR services for individuals with disabilities prior to their exiting high school. The coordination of meaningful transition services for students with disabilities from school-age to postsecondary settings is a priority for ACCES-VR. Within the State Education Department, ACCES-VR collaborates with the Office of Special Education housed within the State Education Department's Office of P-12 Education. The program managers jointly review and share training information and, when relevant, coordinate efforts by inviting respective staff to receive training on transition, accommodations, assessment and knowledge of specific disabilities.

ACCES-VR has a number of VRCs across the State dedicated solely to transition. In one office, ACCES-VR is utilizing a "transition team" concept to serve students with disabilities over a wide geographic area.

The chart below indicates that new applications for youth (applicants prior to age 22) slightly decreased during FFY 2011 year, while the number of youth served has decreased significantly. ACCES-VR served 5,477 fewer youth, and coordinated services with three fewer schools than last year.

ACCES-VR will continue to work closely with schools to enable the smooth transition of students with disabilities from school to work. For FFY 2011, 186 more youth achieved a successful employment outcome than the previous year. The continued increase in employment outcomes for youth is most promising.

Youth with Disabilities (Applicants prior to age 22)	FFY 2006	FFY 2007	FFY 2008	FFY 2009	FFY 2010	FFY 2011
Transition Age Youth applicants	11,777	13,566	18,036	18,406	14,469	13,070
Youth served	29,614	31,696	38,241	44,279	43,709	38,232
Youth employed after VR services	3,575	3,690	4,140	4,202	4,318	4,504
School districts with students with active ACCES-VR cases	644	669	682	693	693	690

Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Costs of Service: Attachment 4.11(b)

ACCES-VR expects that during the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2013, fiscal and personnel resources will be sufficient to serve all eligible persons who apply for services. This expectation is based on ACCES-VR's projections of federal and state funding, staffing plans, referral levels, eligibility rates and service needs, including persons with significant disabilities. In meeting this expectation, ACCES-VR affirms that it will:

- continue to provide a full range of services to all persons currently receiving services;
- provide assessment services to all persons expected to apply next fiscal year;
- serve all persons expected to be determined eligible next year; and,
- meet all statutory program requirements.

Estimates of the Number of Individuals in the State who are Eligible for VR Services and the Number of Eligible Individuals who will Receive VR Services

As required in 34 CFR 361.29(b)(1), ACCES-VR estimates that during the FFY 2013 approximately 38,000 individuals with disabilities will be found eligible for VR services. This estimate is based on the applicant numbers during FFY 2011. Based on a five-year trend formula, ACCES-VR could potentially serve 107,200 individuals during FFY 2013.

This figure, however, is based exclusively on trend data for the previous five years and does not necessarily account for the many complex factors that affect service delivery. Using trend data analysis, the FFY 2012 State Plan estimated that 118,700 individuals would be served, but year-to-date data indicates that we are serving fewer individuals than projected. Due in part to the conclusion of several special projects in FFY 2010 and fluctuations in New York State's economic activity, ACCES-VR expects to serve fewer individuals than projected in the FFY 2012 State Plan. The difference between the trend data projection and the actual number must be taken into account for FFY 2013. The best estimate for the number of individuals who will be served during FFY 2013 is 96,800 individuals - level with the FFY 2011 (96,781 served). The total estimated cost for services is \$212.7 million.

As required in 34 CFR 361.29(b)(2), ACCES-VR estimates that under Title I and Title VI Part B, approximately 11,600 of the estimated 96,800 individuals served during FFY 2013 will receive supported employment services. All of these individuals receiving supported employment services will be served using a combination of Title VI Part B funds and State funds.

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

Federal Title VI, Part B funds for supported employment services were initially used to develop model programs to determine the most effective structure for supported employment and to determine the types of services and supports that work best with different populations. However in New York State (NYS), Title VI, Part B resources alone do not provide sufficient funds to meet the overall demand for supported employment services. For FFY 2011, ACCES-VR's total funding level for supported employment contracts was \$27.6 million of which \$1.3 million was Title VI, Part B funds. The Title VI, Part B funds served approximately 13,700 individuals. At present, Title VI, Part B funds represent less than seven percent of the total funds ACCES-VR uses for intensive supported employment services. ACCES-VR will continue the operation of the supported employment services established under Title VI, Part B and use the funds to supplement, but not supplant, Title I funds.

ACCES-VR combines Title VI, Part B and Section 110 funds to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. Individuals served through supported employment services include individuals with all types of disabilities. ACCES-VR maintains agreements (Memorandum of Understanding and Integrated Employment Implementation Plan, Chapter 515 of the NYS Laws of 1992) with the Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH), which define ACCES-VR as the source for intensive funding. Program evaluation includes a review of data from interagency quarterly reports and on-site reviews, including consumer interviews. Successful and exemplary practices have been disseminated to the staff of the State agencies involved and to other project sites.

Supported Employment Programs

ACCES-VR is in the third year of a five-year cycle of supported employment contracts with approximately 200 supported employment providers. While these continue the hourly fee-for-service payment system, ACCES-VR has begun planning for a performance-based contracting system that would fund based on specific milestones and outcomes.

Through the authority of Chapter 515 of the NYS Laws of 1992, ACCES-VR is assigned the responsibility for administering, establishing standards for and monitoring the intensive services component of all supported employment programs in New York State. ACCES-VR also has the responsibility for the provision of extended services to individuals who are not eligible for such services through other sources.

ACCES-VR, with the cooperation of OMH, OPWDD and CBVH, established the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team in October 2006 for ongoing

coordination of the implementation of supported employment intensive and extended services in New York State. The Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team consists of employment program managers from the respective State agencies. The Team meets monthly to discuss program, data and funding issues, facilitate cross-systems implementation and identify opportunities for program improvements.

During the past year, the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team worked on the following areas:

- Personalized Recovery Oriented Services – ACCES-VR and OMH Central Office managers are meeting regularly to coordinate service delivery in counties where OMH Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS) is being implemented. OMH and ACCES-VR coordinate technical assistance to local areas where changes in extended services providers have occurred to maintain availability of extended services.
- OPWDD Supported Employment Initiative - OPWDD and ACCES-VR continue to meet regularly to discuss areas of mutual interest. In examining the respective eligibility protocols for each program, OPWDD developed a directory of assessment providers and clinics that are capable of generating specific documentation necessary to pursue OPWDD eligibility. This information assists VR counselors and community service providers when working to establish OPWDD eligibility. OPWDD, ACCES-VR and Independent Living (IL) are also exploring ways that VR and IL services may be able to ensure that more youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities enter employment or postsecondary education upon school exit. Local discussions will be held between the ACCES-VR District Offices and the OPWDD regional office on how to best coordinate supported employment services.
- Supported Employment Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) - The State agencies have revised the Supported Employment MOU and are in the process of having the respective leadership of each agency review and approve the MOU. The MOU reflects a renewed commitment and higher expectations for achieving integrated employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities living in NYS.
- New York Employment Services System (NYESS) - The NYS Department of Labor (DOL) and OMH have embarked on a project to transform the DOL information system, known as the One-Stop Operating System, into a data and case services system that includes consolidation with all the components of the New York Interagency Supported Employment Reporting Data System (NYISER). NYISER will be replaced in 2012 by the New York Employment Services System (NYESS) for its supported employment providers. The NYESS is a combined data warehouse and information sharing system for state and community agencies and a job matching/labor exchange system for

consumers and employers. ACCES-VR is currently reviewing the data sharing agreement provided by OMH to assure that confidentiality protocols and protections and other administrative issues are addressed prior to signing the Data *Exchange Agreement* with OMH.

Supported Employment Goals and Priorities

ACCES-VR's Title VI, Part B program goals are to:

- provide services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who might not be traditionally considered appropriate for competitive employment;
- develop techniques for unserved and underserved populations, such as persons with acquired brain injuries, deafness, multiple disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, significant learning disabilities and significant mental illness;
- develop quality programs that could be used for replication purposes; and
- establish successful supported employment programs that will provide technical assistance to other programs.

The discussions that occur in the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team monthly meetings help to achieve the above goals as well as to meet our challenge to close the employment gap between individuals without disabling conditions and individuals with disabilities. Program performance and costs are reviewed at least annually. Service re-negotiations occur based on overall performance, including performance on projected outcomes agreed to by ACCES-VR and the provider.

ACCES-VR vocational rehabilitation counselors manage the individual program of each consumer participating in intensive supported employment. This includes developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and monitoring its implementation. The programs funded under Title VI, Part B represent previously underserved individuals. Every effort is made to improve the project's performance through continuing technical assistance and service delivery improvements.

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

ACCES-VR reserves and uses a portion of federal funds allocated under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities, including support of the needs assessment, equitable access and technology. In addition to specific innovation and expansion activities as required, ACCES-VR is engaged in strategic initiatives to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities which are described in detail in this attachment.

Council Support

Funds are allocated for the operation of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to meet the goals and objectives set forth in the SRC resource plan. The SRC is a full and active partner in the development of ACCES-VR policies, regulations and procedures. The mission of the SRC is to objectively review, analyze, guide and communicate with other entities on behalf of individuals with disabilities, including the Commissioner of the New York State Education Department and ACCES-VR. The SRC assists ACCES-VR in fulfilling the requirements of the Federal Rehabilitation Act for the delivery of quality, consumer responsive VR services.

Technology

Rehabilitation technology is an individualized service that assists individuals with disabilities to achieve full participation in education, rehabilitation, employment, transportation, independent living and recreation. ACCES-VR supports rehabilitation technology that is necessary to achieve the individual's vocational objectives and goals. ACCES-VR has policies that delineate how assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process.

An individual's need for rehabilitation technology is considered at any stage of the vocational rehabilitation (VR) process. Rehabilitation technology is provided if necessary to assess and develop an individual's capacity to perform in a work environment. Before a determination of ineligibility is made because the severity of an individual's disabling condition(s) is believed to be such that they cannot benefit from VR services, rehabilitation technology must be considered as part of the overall assessment.

ACCES-VR uses VR funds for assistive technology at every stage of the rehabilitation process, through purchase, lease or loan to eligible consumers who otherwise could not access services. Two ACCES-VR policies that provide in-depth information about the provision of a broad range of technology services are 1370.00 Rehabilitation Technology Policy and 441.00 Vehicle Modifications, Adaptive and Automotive Equipment Policy. ACCES-VR is in the process of updating the Vehicle

Modifications, Adaptive and Automotive Equipment Policy and Procedures to facilitate the process for assessment and service delivery.

ACCES-VR has service contracts, called the Unified Contract System or UCS, in place with community rehabilitation programs. Some of these contracts contain provisions for assistive technology services from those qualified providers.

ACCES-VR is using technology to improve service delivery to consumers. ACCES-VR also allocates a portion of the I&E funds to improve its electronic case management system, thereby reducing the administrative burdens placed on counseling staff and enhancing the service delivery system through greater efficiencies. ACCES-VR:

- continues to implement technology enhancements to the CaMS electronic record of service as a means of providing additional tools for vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRCs) to manage caseloads and for managers and supervisors to provide oversight;
- has developed and implemented the Supported Employment Information Directory (SEID) to provide critical data to counseling and management staff to assist them with their job responsibilities. The system provides information on each community rehabilitation provider to better enable VRCs to assess services and provide options for consumers to make informed choices about their VR services. Supervisors are able to review performance and cost against other data in the system to assist them in their management of the contracts.

Outreach to Individuals with Disabilities who are Minorities

As a result of the findings in the ACCES-VR's Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment for the FFY 2011 State Plan, ACCES-VR and the SRC initiated strategies to address issues raised by the study regarding individuals in the State who may not be able to fully access VR because of their limited English proficiency. ACCES-VR, with the participation of the SRC, established a Limited English Proficiency Work Team to review consumer needs when English is a secondary language. As a result, ACCES-VR:

- translated essential VR service forms and brochures into Spanish, Russian, Mandarin Chinese and Haitian Creole. These forms are available for public use, and include the: "VR Application"; "ACCES-VR Brochure"; "ACCES-VR Basic Guide"; "Due Process Brochure" and "Developing the IPE";
- developed a procedure for purchasing language interpreter and written translation services for consumers with limited English proficiency which provides direction to VRCs on when and how to purchase language interpreter and written translation services;

- continues to share information about the availability of Limited English Proficiency and other VR services with community rehabilitation providers and Independent Living Centers to ensure that they have the staff training and outreach capacity to meet the needs of the State's minority populations.

Outreach to Serve Individuals with Disabilities who have been Unserved or Underserved

Students with disabilities have been identified as a priority population and ACCES-VR has worked to increase access for students with disabilities into the VR system at an earlier age. ACCES-VR has identified youth with disabilities who will transition from secondary schools to adult services and employment as an underserved population. Youth data substantiates that close to one-half of our current caseloads were youth at application. The coordination of meaningful transition services for students with disabilities from school age to postsecondary settings is a priority area for VR and special education collaboration. ACCES-VR coordinates with the Office of Special Education within the State Education Department's Office of P-12 Education. The program managers jointly review and share training information and coordinate efforts by inviting our respective staffs to participate together in transition team activities, including transition training, accommodations, assessment and knowledge of specific disabilities.

ACCES-VR works closely with schools to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to work. Most promising is the continued increase in employment outcomes for youth, which have increased for the fourth consecutive year. Overall employment outcomes, which had decreased in FFY 2009 and FFY 2010, increased in FFY 2011.

Several strategic actions have been implemented to increase the number of transition students participating in VR services and to increase their achievement of quality employment outcomes. ACCES-VR continues to align internal changes in VR policies with the development of partnerships with the secondary schools and postsecondary institutions within the State. These strategic actions are:

- ACCES-VR participates in the Office of Children and Family Services Education Committee; a multi-agency committee focused on addressing the transition needs of children aging out of the foster care system.
- the Commissioner's Advisory Panel for Special Education, which includes an appointed member of the ACCES-VR Management team. This facilitates close communication between the special education and VR programs.
- the CUNY Linking Employment, Academics and Disability Services (LEADS) program, which was developed with the City University of New York (CUNY). The program continues as an informal collaboration between ACCES-VR and CUNY. ACCES liaison counselors work with CUNY as they provide employment-related services to students with disabilities who are receiving

services under an Individualized Plan for Employment with ACCES-VR and are enrolled on designated CUNY campuses.

In addition to a focus on serving youth, ACCES-VR has several other initiatives and strategic activities described in this attachment and in other sections of the State Plan aimed at improving services to unserved and underserved populations. ACCES-VR sustains strong interagency partnerships in New York State (NYS) and is an active participant in the following strategic activities:

- the NYS Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC); and ACCES-VR co-chairs the Employment Committee of that Council;
- the NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC) and its Strategic Planning, Adult Issues and System Coordination Committees;
- the Business Advisory Council of the Mental Health Association of New York State;
- the Mental Health Planning Advisory Council of the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH); and
- the NYS Department of Health (DOH) Traumatic Brain Injury Coordinating Council.

Through participation in these Councils and their respective networks of consumers, families and providers, ACCES-VR is able to continuously improve its responsiveness to the needs of these populations.

Improving Community Rehabilitation Programs

ACCES-VR continuously works to improve the capacity and service delivery of community rehabilitation programs, including supported employment (SE) services to individuals with the most significant disabilities:

- Unified Contract Services (UCS) Redesign. ACCES-VR provides a wide range of VR services through community rehabilitation programs. The UCS contracts are purposely designed to be flexible and to meet emerging needs, respond to changes in the larger federally funded VR services system and better utilize available resources. Services provided under the UCS contracts offer more consumer choice; updated compensation for services purchased where appropriate; and includes performance standards that allow for assessment of provider effectiveness. Purchased services under UCS contract include: services to assist with entry into the ACCES-VR program; assessment; assistive technology/rehabilitation; work readiness; job placement; driver rehabilitation and related adjunct services such as benefits counseling; non job-related coaching supports; mobility training; and transportation. The current contract period is January 1, 2009 - December 31, 2013.
- Supported Employment (SE) Contract Redesign. Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS) will combine UCS and SE, projected for October 1, 2013, as part of a continuous improvement effort. Supported Employment contracts will be

performance-based, with defined specific milestone and outcome payments that will improve service delivery.

- Supported Employment Training Institute (SETI). The Supported Employment Training Institute continues to provide instruction to community rehabilitation providers in a variety of supported employment related topics. SETI provides workshops to community rehabilitation providers on situational and functional assessment, ethics, job development and placement, job coaching, natural supports, report writing and other topics aimed at developing the skills of direct service staff. Additionally, SETI maintains its website which is a knowledge resource for VR counselors, job developers and job coaches in community rehabilitation programs.
- Series 1310.00 Supported Employment Policy, Procedures and Provider Guidelines are being revised to reflect new evidenced based models of supported employment, develop use of natural supports, enhance compliance procedures and to better align provider guidelines with policy and procedure.
- Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team. ACCES-VR has established and leads the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team consisting of ACCES-VR, the Commission on the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH), the Office of Mental Health (OMH), and the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). The team meets bimonthly on supported employment issues and is working to assure cooperative implementation of the State Education Chapter 515 Integrated Employment law. Chapter 515 primarily focuses upon supported employment, including a memorandum of understanding which outlines the responsibilities of each agency in terms of intensive and extended services. The Chapter 515 Team focuses on communicating programmatic changes with our respective field offices related to new initiatives within the partner agencies and how those changes impact employment services.

Strategies to Improve the Performance Related to Goals, Priorities and Performance Indicators

Priority #1: Increase the employment rate and earnings for individuals with disabilities served by ACCES-VR.

Goal 1.1: Increase the percentage of individuals exiting the VR program after receiving services that achieve an employment outcome and exceed the national standard of 55.8 percent.

RSA Performance Indicator 1.2: Of all closed cases after receiving VR services, at least 55.8 percent will have achieved an employment outcome.

Strategies

- Maintain data bank of job ready consumers.
- Move job ready consumers quickly into UCS or DOL's Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) job placement services.

- Implement protocols for identifying individuals who are “at risk” for Status 28 closure and determining if other supports are needed to sustain the individual in the VR process toward an employment outcome.
- Collaborate with the DDPC and OPWDD on efforts aimed at implementing better methods for individuals with developmental disabilities to obtain and maintain employment and continue collaborative planning with OPWDD on their employment initiatives.

Goal 1.1.A Youth: Increase the percentage of youth with disabilities (applicants prior to age 22) exiting the VR Program after receiving services that achieve an employment outcome and exceed the national standard of 55.8 percent.

Strategies

- Develop stronger local partnerships with school districts and postsecondary institutions, particularly through local transition and postsecondary consortiums.
- Use volunteer experiences and paid employment to develop work experience for youth.
- Provide experiential learning and work experiences through summer, part-time and temporary work experiences.
- Work collaboratively with other State agencies and community organizations with programs that serve transition-age youth to establish participation in ACCES-VR services.

Goal 1.1.B Supported Employment: Increase the percentage of individuals that achieve an integrated employment outcome after receiving supported employment services.

Strategies

- Improve the quality of supported employment services by training ACCES-VR and supported employment providers on updated supported employment policy, procedures and guidelines to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of the supported employment.
- Train ACCES-VR counselors who serve as liaisons to mental health programs on OMH Individual Placement with Supports (IPS) model, implementation and provide on-going technical assistance.
- Explore use of “customized” employment techniques and other promising practices for SE and placement services.

Goal 1.1.C Social Security Participants: Increase the percentage of individuals that are recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or SSI/SSDI and achieve an employment outcome that exceeds the national standard of 55.8 percent.

Strategies

- Assess the effectiveness of the current strategies for benefits advisement counseling, examining the difference between paid and unpaid benefit advisement services as to how these services can be most effective during the VR process.
- Provide benefits counseling earlier in the VR process.
- Initiate a pilot project with the ACCES-VR District Office and community benefits advisors (e.g. WIPA, DEI, ILC and/or UCS) to more intentionally integrate benefits counseling services into the IPE and throughout the VR process to determine if this results in better outcomes, including higher weekly earnings. Proposed “designs” are being discussed for further development.
- Encourage employment networks (ENs) to continue benefits counseling after VR case closure through the Partnership Plus option.
- Works in cooperation with the Social Security Administration’s SSDI demonstration project in western New York counties called BOND – the Benefits Offset National Demonstration.
- Develop a formal information exchange agreement with the Social Security Administration to facilitate VR services to SSA beneficiaries.

Goal 1.2: Improve earnings of individuals achieving an employment outcome by increasing the percentage who earn at least 200% of Poverty (\$416/week) at closure.

Goal 1.3: Increase the average hourly earnings of individuals employed after participating in postsecondary training when compared to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the State and approach the national benchmark ratio of .52.

Strategies

- Target improved earnings for individuals by establishing a higher standard for an employment outcome in the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and providing services that can lead to weekly earnings above the 200 percent of poverty level of \$416/week whenever possible. Establish regional goals to achieve these higher wage outcomes.
- Create incentives in future supported employment and direct placement contracts for placement outcomes with higher wages (e.g. substantial gainful activity level).
- Focus on postsecondary education as a means to increasing skilled employment. Increase percentage of individuals receiving postsecondary education and training.
- Develop collaborations with Disabled Student Services and College Career Centers to ensure students who are participating in ACCES-VR postsecondary training have opportunities for work experience in the course of their education. The ACCES-VR Syracuse District Office will continue to pilot the use of Work Try-Out to provide work experiences for some college students, in cooperation

with Onondaga Community College and Le Moyne College. This is a promising practice that encourages students to obtain work experiences that may lead to better quality employment outcomes upon graduation.

Priority # 2: Increase services to unserved and underserved groups.

Goal 2.1: The service rate for identified unserved and underserved populations will be commensurate with the NYS population rates for those populations based on race, ethnicity and disability.

RSA Performance Indicator 2.1: The ratio of the percent of individuals with a minority background to the percent of individuals without a minority background exiting the program that received VR services; RSA Performance standard > or = .80

Strategies

- Monitor VR participation and outcome measures for those individuals with serious mental illness and with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including individuals with autism spectrum disorders, who are considered at risk for being underserved by the VR Program in context to the broader employment system.
- Engage the Independent Living Centers in a coordinated effort to provide outreach to other community-based organizations who serve unserved and underserved populations.
- Increase the coordination and participation of VR consumers in adult education and Literacy Zone services, as well as increase the provision of services to English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).
- Collaborate with DOH AIDS Institute to pilot a referral process from community-based AIDS organizations to local VR Offices, DOL staff at one-stop centers and Independent Living Centers in selected areas.
- Increase access to interpreters, translators and rehabilitation technology to consumers requiring this assistance, particularly individuals who are hard of hearing or deaf.
- Utilize the appropriate supports for individuals who use ESOL and apply for VR services.

Priority # 3: Improve the quality of ACCES-VR services.

Goal 3.1: Increase consumer satisfaction with VR Program services.

Strategies

- Increase capacity of VR counselors through the provision of continuous training and technical assistance on policy and practice aimed at achieving quality employment outcomes.

- Improve the quality of post employment services, including developing the capacity of individuals to earn higher weekly wages as well as obtaining ongoing supports aimed at economic self-sufficiency, natural supports, asset accumulation and benefits advisement.
- Increase communication to consumers, employers, providers and other stakeholders (associations, school districts) regarding ACCES-VR services and provide opportunities for feedback on services.
- Monitor the vocational process from referral and application, through job placement and closure through monthly performance reports, to increase timeliness and direct VR counselor engagement with consumers to improve the quality of the services and the number of individuals who go to work after receiving ACCES-VR services.

Goal 3.2: Increase collaboration with community partners, particularly the State agency partners who share responsibility for achieving employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Strategies

- ACCES-VR developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the NYS Department of Labor for a cooperative effort through its DEI to improve service options and results for individuals with disabilities served through the one-stop centers.
- Through the DEI initiative, implement the Integrated Resource Team's concept in local one-stop centers by incorporating ACCES-VR counselor participation, yielding more employment outcomes for consumers.
- Collaborate with the NYS Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) on "recovery-oriented" approaches to employment and VR services and train staff.

Goal 3.3: Increase collaboration with employers that may lead to employment outcomes.

Strategies

- ACCES-VR will continue leading efforts to establish working relationships with businesses within New York State through the National Employment Team (the NET) business initiatives increasing employment opportunities within NYS.
- The ACCES-VR Business Relations and Workforce Development Unit will continue to establish relationships and develop statewide and regional small business partnerships accounts.
- The ACCES-VR Business Relations and Workforce Development Coordinators in each district office maintain a data bank of job ready individuals in order to more effectively respond to job market opportunities.
- Revitalize existing placement consortiums and coordinate efforts to leverage and maximize development and placement resources.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey

In November 2010, the Potsdam Institute for Applied Research at SUNY Potsdam surveyed 5,000 consumers whose cases were closed in 2009 either employed (status 26) or not employed (status 28). ACCES-VR reported these results in the FFY 2012 State Plan, stating that the results indicated that 76 percent of respondents were satisfied with the quality of ACCES-VR services. Approximately 73 percent of respondents would recommend ACCES-VR to someone else. Sixty-six percent (66%) of respondents felt that the time it took to begin receiving services was acceptable to them. Over 89 percent felt they were treated courteously by reception staff and approximately 86 percent agreed that they were treated courteously by counseling staff.

In December, 2011, the Potsdam Institute for Applied Research at SUNY Potsdam sent a survey to 6,825 consumers who had received placement services. Preliminary results indicate that of the 864 responses returned, 72.2% reported good or very good satisfaction with ACCES-VR services. The final report of this survey has not been issued, and ACCES-VR will include an analysis of the survey results in next year's State Plan.

Strategies for the Statewide Workforce Investment System to Assist Individuals with Disabilities

ACCES-VR continues to develop and implement strategies focused on enhancing ACCES-VR's role as a partner in the One-Stop System. The New York State Department of Labor (DOL) and ACCES-VR formed a partnership around the DEI. ACCES-VR expects tangible results related to increased access to the full range of one-stop center services for ACCES-VR consumers as well as other individuals with disabilities seeking employment. Through the DOL-ACCES-VR DEI collaboration:

- ACCES-VR provided initial financial support for Disability Resource Coordinators in selected one-stop centers to align with NYS DOL's DEI Program;
- new DEI Employment Network requirements were aligned to the ACCES-VR Ticket To Work procedures for serving SSI and SSDI participants;
- technology efforts between DOL and ACCES-VR are coordinated to enhance service accountability for achieving established performance benchmarks; and
- ACCES-VR will continue to focus on coordination of services among partners in local workforce areas.

Equitable Access

ACCES-VR is committed to increasing the options for integrated employment opportunities in New York State without regard to the age, race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, military status, sex, disability, predisposing genetic characteristics, or marital status of any individual. ACCES-VR is implementing the following strategies:

- ACCES-VR has professional staff able to communicate in the native language of individuals who are non-English speaking or who use other modes of communication, such as sign language. When such staff is not available, ACCES-VR contracts with outside agencies and individuals for interpreter or communication services.
- ACCES-VR counselors by training are well aware of how an individual's cognitive disability might affect his or her ability to participate in the VR process and the need to provide supports and accommodations to these individuals in the VR process.
- ACCES-VR has translated essential forms and documents into Spanish, Russian, Mandarin Chinese and Haitian Creole, and developed a procedure to purchase language and written translation services.
- There are activities at a local level for District Offices to facilitate access to VR services for those individuals re-entering the community after incarceration, as timeliness is critical for successful re-entry. In Brooklyn, ACCES-VR has a leadership role in coordinating the re-entry consortium. In Syracuse, ACCES-VR has a VRC assigned to drug court, helping to divert drug offenders from prison whenever possible through the provision of quality employment services.
- ACCES-VR is working collaboratively with OASAS and has formed an OASAS-ACCES-VR Statewide Team. The team has developed a new Memorandum of Understanding on Recovery (July 2010), a Substance Use Disorder Technical Assistance Brief (January 2011) as guidance for VRCs, and a Vocational Rehabilitation Readiness Assessment for service coordination. The OASAS-ACCES-VR Statewide Team developed curriculum and conducted cross training for staff.

Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities: Attachment 4.11(e)(2)

Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998, requires the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to evaluate State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies based on their performance on evaluation standards and indicators. Performance on these standards is used to determine whether a State VR agency is complying substantially with the provisions of its State Plan. States that do not meet the performance criteria will be required to develop a program improvement plan jointly with RSA. In addition to the required performance indicators, ACCES-VR has established additional measures related to the priorities and goals described in Attachment 4.11(c)(1) Annual Goals and Priorities. The following results are based on the most recent data available on the federal performance indicators and the priorities and goals, as described in Attachment 4.11(c)(1).

Priority #1: Individuals with disabilities, including youth, will be employed in integrated work settings consistent with their abilities, interests and achievements.

Goal 1.1.1: Increase the total number of individuals that achieve an employment outcome (RSA Performance Indicator 1.1).

Performance for FFY 2010: 12,092, a decrease from FFY 2009

Performance for FFY 2011: 12,194, an increase from FFY 2010

Results: ACCES-VR had an increase in the number of individuals achieving an employment outcome for FFY 2011. In FFY 2011, the number of employment outcomes increased by 102 placements.

The employment outcome numbers are influenced by many factors, including the overall economic climate in the State. New York State (NYS) experienced a deep recession from 2008 to 2010 which led to increased unemployment. The economic situation began to slowly improve in 2011. The annual average number of unemployed in NYS fell from 824,700 in 2010, to 774,700 in 2011, a decrease of 50,000 or almost one half of a percent. The average annual statewide unemployment rate decreased from 8.6 percent in 2010 to 8.2 percent in 2011. In New York City, the average annual unemployment rate fell from 9.5 percent in 2010 to 9 percent in 2011. (Data source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program, NYS Department of Labor).

Even with this slight decrease in unemployment, job seekers with disabilities who may not have the experience of these recently unemployed more seasoned workers, are at a distinct disadvantage in the job market. The increase in VR performance was most likely influenced by the District Offices' increased efforts to improve performance. The number of individuals that applied for VR service during FFY 2011 decreased from

39,384 in 2010 to 37,866 in FFY 2011, slightly reducing the average counselor caseload size from 175 to 166 consumers.

Goal 1.1.2: Increase the total number of youth (applicants prior to age 22) that achieve an employment outcome.

Performance for FFY 2010: 4,318, an increase from FFY 2009

Performance for FFY 2011: 4,504, an increase from FFY 2010

Results: ACCES-VR continues to focus on effectively assisting youth in transition, and this particular indicator shows a continued increase (+186) in FFY 2011. The overall increase in youth served is a promising indicator that we will continue to increase employment outcomes in future years. This is the fifth year that ACCES-VR is reporting the results for this goal related to its priority on integrated quality employment. Youth accounted for approximately 37 percent of the overall employment outcomes. It is likely that the results of this indicator have been affected by the collaboration of the ACCES-VR counselor with students, families and school personnel. The results show that continued collaboration with schools and work experiences for students are essential benchmarks of successful transition to work.

Goal 1.2.1: Increase the percentage of individuals exiting the VR Program after receiving services that achieve an employment outcome and exceed the national standard of 55.8 percent (Performance Indicator 1.2).

Performance for FFY 2010: 45.9 percent, below the standard

Performance for FFY 2011: 48.8 percent, below the standard

Results: The percentage of individuals with disabilities who achieved employment after receiving VR services from ACCES-VR in FFY 2011 is 48.8 percent which is below the national standard of 55.8 percent by seven percentage points. Although ACCES-VR District Offices continue to make significant efforts to increase employment outcomes, the results are affected by the significant downturn in the economy. In order to reverse this trend, the VR Program will have to work diligently with its community partners to identify employment opportunities for VR participants and use strategies such as Work Try Out or On the Job Training to provide a competitive advantage when appropriate.

Goal 1.2.2: Increase the percentage of youth with disabilities (applicants prior to age 22) exiting the VR Program after receiving services that achieve an employment outcome and exceed the national standard of 55.8 percent.

Performance for FFY 2010: 42.5 percent, below the standard

Performance for FFY 2011: 46.9 percent, below the standard

Results: This employment goal for youth has increased this past federal fiscal year. While the percentage of youth at application who had previously achieved an employment outcome after receiving services exceeded the standard and increased for three consecutive years (FFY 2006 through FFY 2008), the downturn in the economy combined with a significant increase in the number of youth participating in VR services resulted in a high number of status 28 closures during FFY 2011 (5,101).

Goal 1.3: Increase the percentage of individuals achieving an employment outcome that earn at least minimum wage (RSA Performance Indicator 1.3) and exceed the national standard of 72.6 percent.

Performance for FFY 2010: 95.4 percent, exceeds the standard

Performance for FFY 2011: 96.3 percent, exceeds the standard

Results: The FFY 2011 rate of 96.3 percent is a slight increase from the FFY 2010 rate of 95.4 percent of individuals obtaining employment through ACCES-VR earning at or above minimum wage. For both years, ACCES-VR far exceeds the national benchmark standard of 72.6 percent. The slight increase is encouraging and may be due to a renewed focus on the quality of employment outcomes.

Goal 1.4: Increase the percentage of individuals having significant disabilities that achieve competitive employment (RSA Performance Indicator 1.4) and exceed the national standard of 62.4 percent.

Performance for FFY 2010: 98.2 percent, exceeds the standard

Performance for FFY 2011: 98.2 percent, exceeds the standard

Results: Individuals are considered to have a significant disability when they have a physical or mental impairment which seriously limits one or two functional capacities such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, cognition, work tolerance, or work skills and whose vocational rehabilitation will require multiple VR services over an extended period of time. ACCES-VR assisted a substantially greater percentage of individuals with significant disabilities to achieve competitive employment compared to the national standard. For FFY 2011, 98.2 percent of individuals with significant disabilities obtained employment through ACCES-VR earning at least minimum wage, the same percentage as in FFY 2010. This rate has been consistent since FFY 2000. ACCES-VR has sustained a consistently higher percentage of individuals having significant disabilities who achieve competitive employment than the national benchmark. The national benchmark standard is 62.4 percent. ACCES-VR is serving a high percentage of individuals with significant disabilities and has developed a strong infrastructure to competently serve these individuals through its partnerships with the State offices for mental health, developmental disabilities, blind and visually impaired, health (AIDS Institute) and alcoholism and substance abuse services.

Goal 1.5.1: Increase the average hourly earnings of individuals employed after receiving ACCES-VR services when compared to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the State and approach the national benchmark ratio of .52. (RSA Performance Indicator 1.5 - *Average hourly earnings of individuals employed through ACCES-VR who earn at least minimum wage compared to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the State.*)

Performance for FFY 2010: .37, below the standard

Performance for FFY 2011: .37, below the standard

Results: Performance on this indicator remained at .37, the same as in FFY 2010. The average FFY 2011 VR hourly wage actually increased from \$10.70 to \$10.88. Concurrently, the average State wage also increased from \$28.84 to \$29.60. To meet the standard for this indicator in 2011 in NYS, the average VR wage would need to be \$15.39. ACCES-VR results for this standard remain below the national benchmark, which is set at a ratio of .52. This ratio reflects the relationship of hourly wages earned by individuals at the time of closure (typically 90 days after attaining employment) to the average hourly wage for all workers in the State. The benchmark ratio of .52 is set at just above half of the overall state hourly wage.

There are many structural forces in the NYS economy that make it challenging for individuals participating in VR to earn a livable wage. Many of the individuals served by ACCES-VR, given the economic need criteria for many VR services, are low-income individuals. A high percentage of individuals served by the VR Program are determined to have significant and most significant disabilities. The wide gap in wage distribution in NYS also makes this performance measure particularly problematic for low-income individuals participating in VR services. However, ACCES-VR remains committed to improving its performance on this indicator and assisting VR participants in obtaining higher wage employment outcomes.

As an alternative to this performance indicator, ACCES-VR measures the percentage of individuals that earn at or above the 200 percent poverty level, which is a commonly accepted standard for economic self-sufficiency. For FFY 2011 one quarter of all VR wage earners (2,931 individuals) earned above the 200 percent of poverty level (see Attachments 4.11(c)(1) and 4.11(d)). ACCES-VR anticipates that its efforts to promote greater participation in postsecondary education and training will eventually yield more significant increases in earnings.

Goal 1.5.2: Increase the average hourly earnings of individuals employed after participating in postsecondary training when compared to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the State and exceed the national benchmark ratio of .52 (Variation on RSA Performance Indicator 1.5).

Performance for FFY 2010: .40, below the standard

Performance for FFY 2011: .41, below the standard

Results: The average VR wage of individuals who participate in postsecondary training was steady for three years (FFY 2006 and 2007 at \$11.65, and FFY 2008 at \$11.64 per hour); dropped during FFY 2009 to \$11.49 and in FFY 2010 to \$11.41; and increased in FFY 2011 to \$11.72. As would be expected, individuals who participate in postsecondary training are earning higher wages on average when compared to all VR participants. These individuals are still securing jobs, on average, at wages below the .52 threshold established by RSA. These individuals are earning about \$3.67 less per hour than the required threshold. One factor that might account for lower wages is that ACCES-VR job seekers, while gaining postsecondary training to increase their overall wages, may still be at a disadvantage in comparison to their non-disabled counterparts who may have more work experience, in addition to training, upon entering the job

market. Job seekers without disabilities may be tapping into the higher wage opportunities at a greater rate than job seekers with disabilities. The VR program sponsored 1999 Task Force on Postsecondary Education and Disabilities cited concern that students with disabilities often had difficulty accessing educational internships as well as on-site recruiting opportunities, as compared to non-disabled students. These concerns are still viable today.

ACCES-VR will continue to use the strategy of supporting higher education and workforce credentials as a means to higher wage employment and careers by developing specific strategies to address postsecondary work experience in Attachment 4.11(d).

Goal 1.6: Of all individuals who achieve paid employment, increase the percentage of individuals that report their own income as the largest single source of economic support at the time they exit the VR Program when compared to what was reported at application.

(RSA Performance Indicator 1.6 is the percentage increase of individuals that report their own income as the largest single source of economic support from the time of application for ACCES-VR services to the time of successful closure in employment with earnings of at least minimum wage. The national standard is a difference greater than or equal to 53)

Performance for FFY 2010: 59.8 difference, exceeds the standard

Performance for FFY 2011: 60.0 difference, exceeds the standard

Results: In FFY 2011, the difference of individuals with disabilities who reported their own earnings as the largest single source of support from the time of application to successful closure was 60. This was an increase of 0.2 from FFY 2010, and exceeds the national benchmark of 53. In FFY 2010, the difference of individuals with disabilities who reported their own earnings as the largest single source of support from the time of application to successful closure was 59.8. This was a slight decrease of 1.3 from FFY 2009. The results this past year are the first increase in this performance indicator since FFY 2006. ACCES-VR continues to strive for quality placements and building its network of providers to achieve better employment outcomes with VR participants.

Priority # 2: All services for which ACCES-VR has responsibility will be consumer-focused, cost-effective, meet high standards and continuously improve.

Goal 2.1: The service rate for individuals from minority backgrounds will exceed the national standard and will be comparable to the service rate for individuals not from minority backgrounds (RSA Performance Indicator 2.1, national standard $\geq .80$).

Performance for FFY 2010: .87, exceeds the standard

Performance for FFY 2011: .89, exceeds the standard

Results: In FFY 2011, minority individuals with disabilities received vocational rehabilitation services at a rate of 89 individuals for every 100 non-minority individuals.

ACCES-VR continues to exceed the national standard on this indicator. The national standard ratio is .80. ACCES-VR has consistently met the performance standard for this indicator since its inception. It is also noteworthy that ACCES-VR seems to be serving a higher percentage of black or African-American individuals in comparison to the general NYS population. One factor assisting ACCES-VR in meeting this standard is its efforts to hire staff whose diversity reflects the communities we are serving.

Goal 2.2: Consumer satisfaction with ACCES-VR services will increase annually toward the target of 95 percent of respondents expressing satisfaction on key questions contained in ACCES-VR consumer satisfaction surveys.

Performance for FFY 2011: In 2010, the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services - Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES – VR) contracted with the Potsdam Institute for Applied Research at SUNY Potsdam to survey 5,000 consumers whose cases were closed in 2009 either employed (status 26) or not employed (status 28). There were 534 surveys returned. This is a 10.7 percent response rate.

Results: Results indicated that 76 percent of respondents were satisfied with the quality of ACCES-VR services. Approximately 73 percent of respondents would recommend ACCES-VR to someone else.

Performance for FFY 2012: In December 2011, the Potsdam Institute for Applied Research at SUNY Potsdam sent a survey to 6,825 consumers who had received placement services. Preliminary results indicate that of the 864 responses returned, 72.2 percent reported good or very good satisfaction with ACCES-VR services.

Preliminary results indicate that general satisfaction with VR services has dropped from 76 percent to 72.2 percent in this most recent survey. It also continues to be below the ACCES-VR established target of 95 percent. ACCES-VR and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee will review the final report, when available, and analyze the findings in terms of practice and significance from the VR participants' perspective. An analysis of the results will be included in next year's State Plan.

Evaluation of Supported Employment Goals

ACCES-VR's Title VI, Part B program goals are to:

- provide services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who might not be traditionally considered appropriate for competitive employment;

Results: Through the cooperative efforts of ACCES-VR, the Commission for Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH), the NYS Office of Mental Health

(OMH) and the NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), as tracked by the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team, during the State Fiscal Year 2011 (April 1, 2010 – March 31, 2011), a total of 15,791 individuals with the most significant disabilities were working in supported employment (SE) as a result of intensive services provided by ACCES-VR and CBVH and extended services by OMH, OPWDD and ACCES-VR. These individuals require the supports available through the supported employment strategy to maintain competitive employment. This is an increase from last year when a total of 15,286 individuals participated in supported employment intensive and extended services. New York State continues to demonstrate a substantial commitment to a coordinated supported employment program.

- develop techniques for unserved and underserved populations, such as persons with acquired brain injuries, deafness, multiple disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, significant learning disabilities and significant mental illness;

Results: ACCES-VR is engaged in a number of initiatives to develop the quality of supported employment services, including OPWDD's pilot project to demonstrate innovative employment strategies for individuals who want to work but who have been unable to become successfully employed for a variety of reasons. ACCES-VR and OPWDD will use what they learn from this initiative to enable individuals with the most significant intellectual and developmental disabilities, including brain injury, multiple disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, to become successfully employed consistent with their strengths, abilities and interests.

- develop quality programs that could be used for replication purposes; and

Results: Another major effort is to improve the ongoing training for supported employment providers. ACCES-VR awarded a contract to SUNY Buffalo for the purpose of providing statewide training to the entire network of supported employment providers across the State through the Supported Employment Training Institute (SETI). SETI highlights the best practices of existing supported employment programs and helps supported employment providers to replicate those practices. Working in close collaboration with ACCES-VR Central and District Office staff, SETI provides technical assistance to these programs in their efforts to provide high quality supported employment services. SETI also covers topics related to techniques for serving emerging and challenging populations, (i.e. individuals with autism spectrum disorders or multiple learning disabilities). ACCES-VR also continues to conduct periodic monitoring visits to supported employment providers and engages the providers in making technical improvements and taking corrective action when necessary.

- Establish successful supported employment programs that will provide technical assistance to other programs.

Results: The State agency partners (OMH, OPWDD, CBVH and ACCES-VR) will continue to enhance their collaboration. The Partners have reached agreement regarding the content of the Supported Employment Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that reflects a renewed commitment and higher expectations for achieving integrated employment outcomes for individuals with significant disabilities. This MOU, that outlines principles for State level coordination and local implementation, has begun the formal approval process.

Over the past year, ACCES-VR has continued its collaborative role in facilitating a focused dialogue around supported employment with our State agency and community rehabilitation program partners. ACCES-VR meets every other month with the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team, consisting of representatives from ACCES-VR, CBVH, OMH and OPWDD.

Continuous Quality Improvements

ACCES-VR remains committed to continuous quality improvement in VR services. ACCES-VR will use data to evaluate the impact of its policies, procedures and practices. Priorities and goals will be measured and modified to respond to findings from ACCES-VR's comprehensive statewide needs assessment (See Attachment 4.11(a)). These evaluation and assessment activities will be used by ACCES-VR and the SRC to align policies, procedures, training and practice to achieve the goals of the program. NYSED, with the joint effort of the SRC, is committed to operating a statewide comprehensive, effective, efficient and accountable VR Program that provides VR services to eligible individuals with disabilities, consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and informed choice, so that they may prepare for and engage in gainful employment.

Innovation and Expansion Activities

ACCES-VR has allocated \$432,855 towards innovation and expansion activities. This includes \$421,725 for contracting with community rehabilitation programs to provide orientation services to ACCES-VR consumers under the Unified Contract Services. It also includes \$11,130 for the operation of the SRC, particularly the travel costs of the Council members, to meet the goals and objectives that it sets forth in its resource plan.

Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; and Explanation for Rejection of Input or Recommendations: Attachment 4.2(c)

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is mandated under the Rehabilitation Act to work in partnership with the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services, Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR). Together, the SRC and ACCES-VR partner to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive timely and effective vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. The SRC relies on the following committees to carry out its responsibilities: the Executive Committee; the Membership Committee; the Policy and Procedures Committee; the Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee; and the Workforce Development Committee. The SRC Chairperson, Committee Chairpersons and the ACCES-VR SRC Liaison constitute the Executive Committee that coordinates the work of the committees based on their strategic planning and the statutory obligations of the SRC.

ACCES-VR and the SRC work cooperatively in setting strategic priorities and in developing agency policy for the delivery of VR services for eligible New Yorkers with disabilities. ACCES-VR convenes ad hoc policy development committees when undertaking substantive policy changes. These committees are typically chaired by an ACCES-VR Policy and Partnerships Unit personnel along with representation from VR management, vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRC) and key stakeholders. An SRC representative has served as an integral partner in the development of all substantive ACCES-VR policy reforms that were undertaken over the course of the reporting period.

The following is a summary of recommendations made by the New York State Rehabilitation Council to ACCES-VR and the corresponding responses from ACCES-VR to the recommendations:

Transition

SRC Recommendation: ACCES-VR should initiate a formal ongoing dialogue with the special education unit around transition issues.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR and the Office of P-12 Education are engaged in an ongoing dialogue on opportunities for collaboration and strategies that will lead to improved transition outcomes for students with disabilities. Two reports to the Board of Regents and the associated meetings have focused on how current transition practices may be improved. ACCES-VR and the Office of Special Education (OSE) managers meet monthly to identify and implement transition coordination activities.

SRC Recommendation: ACCES-VR should utilize the research findings and training materials developed by Cornell University from its assessment of the Model Transition Program (MTP) to promote transition best practices statewide.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR and OSE are integrating key findings and evidence-informed practices resulting from the MTP in its ongoing technical assistance and consultation with local school districts. ACCES-VR District Offices are also informed of practices that promote quality transition outcomes.

SRC Recommendation: ACCES-VR should provide the SRC with more comprehensive data related to youth and transition policies.

ACCES-VR Response: Comprehensive ACCES-VR transition data trends for the past five years were shared with the SRC and ACCES-VR remains committed to providing the SRC with ongoing data from existing data reports.

SRC Recommendation: ACCES-VR should advance the recommendation to CSAVR and the State Education Department (SED) Office of Government Relations for dedicated funding to support transition services for students with disabilities in the Rehabilitation Act reauthorization.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR has communicated to CSAVR the need for dedicated funding to support transition services for youth with disabilities in the next reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act.

SRC Recommendation: The SRC expressed concern with the Office of P-12 Education new Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential to replace the current Individualized Education Program (IEP) diploma, particularly how students and their families will be accommodated in the new credentialing process and what communication strategies will be employed to inform students and families of the value and challenges associated with any new credentialing process.

ACCES-VR Response: The SED Office of P-12 Education solicited extensive stakeholder input during the development of the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential. The Office of P-12 Education, Special Education Director of Policy presented to the full SRC and provided an opportunity to comment on the future direction and development of alternative diplomas and credentials for students with disabilities. ACCES-VR and OSE are committed to the SRC's ongoing engagement as new approaches are evaluated.

SRC Recommendation: ACCES-VR should identify opportunities for youth to secure employment in middle skills jobs.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR Integrated Employment Specialists and VRCs consider low, middle and high skilled employment opportunities as a course of labor market analysis for every consumer as a component of developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). ACCES-VR looks forward to the completion of the SRC Middle Skills White Paper and its anticipated recommendations.

SRC Recommendations: The SRC recommends that ACCES-VR continue in its efforts to coordinate with post-secondary institutions (including proprietary schools) to develop programs that lead to employment after graduation.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR remains committed to fostering postsecondary education and training and will continue to work closely with the office within SED responsible for the coordination and oversight, including the Office of Proprietary Schools.

Policy

SRC Recommendation: The SRC endorses ACCES-VR streamlining of the economic need determination process that reduces burdensome administrative requirements for VRCs. The SRC recommends ACCES-VR consider working with third parties (e.g. Higher Education Services Corporation) or develop an automated system for establishing economic need.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR is revising the economic need determination process which simplifies administrative requirements while expediting service delivery. The case management system is being updated to reflect this change. ACCES-VR will continue to evaluate our procedures and technology to streamline administrative processes.

SRC Recommendation: The SRC requested ACCES-VR evaluate how the change in the extended services capacity of the supported employment contracts (e.g., limits on the non-VR funding of extended services) might impact participants' access to supported employment services and long term job stability.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR policy will continue its commitment to comprehensive supported employment including coordination of post-VR ongoing support services provided with ACCES-VR state dollars or through funding from the Office of Mental Health (OMH) and the Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).

SRC Recommendation: The SRC requested ACCES-VR develop a process for ongoing evaluation of policies to determine whether the expected results and impact on employment outcomes are being achieved.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR evaluates effective VR service delivery and the impact of any policy changes on an ongoing basis.

SRC Recommendation: The SRC recommends that ACCES-VR continue to evaluate the quality and scope of services provided to consumers who rely on Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSI/SSDI). ACCES-VR data demonstrates that SSI/SSDI beneficiaries earn less in average wages than ACCES-

VR's overall caseload; therefore the SRC recommends that ACCES-VR identify strategies for improved outcomes for these individuals.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR has, jointly with the SRC, developed a specific goal and strategies in the State Plan for improving the rehabilitation rate of individuals who receive SSI or SSDI.

SRC Recommendation: The SRC requests ACCES-VR provide data associated with implementation of the Social Security Ticket to Work (TTW) program.

ACCES-VR Response: The ACCES-VR will continue its partnership with the SRC Policy Committee on the data collection and analysis associated with the implementation of Social Security Ticket to Work Program for consumers.

Partnerships

SRC Recommendation: ACCES-VR needs to clarify expected outcomes of the partnership with NYS Department of Labor (DOL) for the Disability Employment Initiative.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR District Office liaisons have worked with local Disability Resource Coordinators to identify specific processes related to referral, assessment, benefits counseling, job placement and data collection.

SRC Recommendation: ACCES-VR should request from DOL Statewide Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) and SED Office of P-12 Special Education to, respectively, identify a SWIB and Special Education representative to serve on the SRC, as required by the Rehabilitation Act.

ACCES-VR Response: The ACCES-VR SRC liaison made a request for SWIB representation on the SRC to senior DOL management. DOL indicated the SWIB was engaged in reorganization and could not commit to representation at the time. A representative from Office of P-12 was appointed and is now serving on the SRC.

SRC Recommendation: ACCES-VR should implement strategies that result in the engagement of service providers with strong capabilities in job development, client-focused job training, and who have proven relationships with employers in the communities they serve.

ACCES-VR Response: The Supported Employment Information Directory (SEID) was developed to assist consumers in making informed choices. ACCES-VR District Offices monitor service providers through contract utilization and continuously engage with providers to improve the quality of employment outcomes.

State Plan

SRC Recommendation: The SRC requested that ACCES–VR continue to monitor the performance indicators developed in partnership with the SRC to determine when ACCES–VR needs to consider an order of selection.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES will continue to monitor the order of selection indicators, developed in partnership with the SRC, and will advise the SRC when ACCES-VR is approaching the need to implement an order of selection.

SRC Recommendation: The SRC requested ACCES–VR continue to report on the ongoing development of strategies for implementing the ACCES-VR State Plan **Goals and Priorities 4.11(c)(1)**. Development of the document represented an extensive long-term planning effort and partnership between the SRC and ACCES–VR.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR District Office managers are monitoring the entire vocational process from referral and application, through eligibility, employment plan development and implementation, job placement and closure based on monthly performance reports for each of their offices. The focus is on timeliness and improved VR counselor consumer interaction to enhance the quality of the services as well as increase the number of individuals who go to work after receipt of VR services.

SRC Recommendation: As ACCES–VR develops their statewide needs assessment, the SRC recommends using qualitative activities as well as traditional quantitative measures. Specifically, the SRC Quality Assurance Committee recommended the use of focus groups and phone surveys as vehicles for gathering a more comprehensive set of unmet needs statewide.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR will evaluate the practicality and the cost-benefit of incorporating focus groups and phone surveys into its needs assessment protocols. ACCES-VR will continue to research needs assessment best practices as undertaken by partners (e.g., New York State Independent Living Council (NYSILC), Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH), Region II Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE) to identify improved strategies for undertaking statewide VR need assessments and will work jointly with the SRC.

SRC Recommendation: ACCES-VR might consider including a wider array of “stakeholders” in connection with the statewide needs assessment process to include employers in high demand occupations, ACCES-VR counselors and a sampling of direct service providers.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR will continue to incorporate VRCs, job placement specialists, community providers and businesses stakeholders in the development of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment.

Consumer Satisfaction

SRC Recommendation: The SRC requested ACCES-VR utilize a wider range of information gathering tools and processes to assess customer satisfaction, including in-person interviews and focus groups, and include Independent Living Centers and other stakeholder groups in the assessment process.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR Quality Assurance and Monitoring Unit will continue to work with the SRC Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee to integrate additional mechanisms to gauge consumer satisfaction.

SRC Recommendation: The SRC reviewed the 2011 customer satisfaction survey and made the following recommendations:

- Revise the wording of the questions to make the intent of the question clearer;
- Revise the format to make the survey easier to understand and respond to; and
- Include the option of completing the survey over the phone to address accessibility needs.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR incorporated the first two recommendations into the consumer satisfaction survey.

Organization

SRC Recommendation: The SRC requested ACCES-VR to provide ongoing updates with regard to the ACCES reorganization including linkages and collaborations between ACCES-VR and P-12, Special Education, Proprietary Schools, Adult Education and Literacy Zones, Independent Living Centers, Special Education Parent Centers and General Equivalency Diploma (GED) programs.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES routinely provides quarterly updates on ACCES and ACCES-VR at every SRC quarterly meeting and commits to keeping the SRC informed of ACCES initiatives internal and external to SED that may potentially impact ACCES-VR constituents and consumers.

SRC Recommendation: The SRC reviewed the ACCES-VR impartial hearing officer training curricula and recommends disability literacy training as a new component for impartial hearing officers.

ACCES-VR Response: The ACCES-VR Quality Assurance Unit has incorporated a disability literacy component into the training curriculum for all impartial hearing officers.

SRC Recommendation: The SRC requests all current and recent SRC-related documents, including, minutes be made available to all SRC members on a secure website.

ACCES-VR Response: ACCES-VR maintains an SRC webpage under the *Partners* portal on the ACCES main webpage. This site includes key SRC documents and will be maintained to include minutes and SRC related documents.

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

A continuing priority for ACCES-VR is coordinating services to youth with disabilities. ACCES-VR works closely with the New York State Education Department's Office of P-12 Education - Office of Special Education (OSE) to ensure that students with disabilities are prepared for employment, postsecondary education, and community living when they leave school. ACCES-VR also works closely with the local education agencies to provide transition services. It is ACCES-VR's policy to seek school referrals within two years prior to school exit to facilitate coordination of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services with school service planning.

Youth, as defined by ACCES-VR, are individuals with disabilities who are less than 22 years of age at application to the VR program. In FFY 2011, ACCES-VR served 38,225 youths, a decrease from the previous year. Of these, 23,310 youths were considered to be most significantly disabled. Caseload statistics on youth are monitored to determine the progress of ACCES-VR in serving and placing youth.

VR Transition Policy

ACCES-VR collaborated with OSE and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) in 2008 to revise the 421.00 Youth in School - Transition Referral, Planning and Services Policy, to ensure a common understanding of transition requirements and responsibilities and to assist with building a collaborative partnership between transition specialists, school districts and ACCES-VR district offices throughout the state.

This policy established an affirmative role for vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRCs) working with students in transition from school to work, a critical time for young adults with disabilities. The policy encourages initiating referral of students with disabilities two years prior to their expected school exit. It outlines the role of the VRC as an active participant in the transition planning process. The policy provides information regarding the documentation that may, with parental or student consent as appropriate, be available from school districts to assist the VRC in determining the students' eligibility for VR services and to expedite post-school services. The ACCES-VR counselor works with the school districts to identify in-school youth who are likely to be eligible for VR services. The VRC can assist students with disabilities to prepare for and obtain employment consistent with their employment factors.

While local school districts are responsible for providing education and transition services to students with disabilities who are still in high school, the ACCES-VR counselor can provide transition services that involve preparing for the students' future employment. After application, the ACCES-VR counselor, together with the student and student's family, works with the school district to coordinate VR services for students with disabilities.

As an active participant in the transition planning process, the ACCES-VR counselor may:

1. inform students, parents and school staff about VR services related to employment;
2. work with the school district to identify students who may benefit from VR services and determine eligibility for VR services;
3. counsel students and their parents about career planning and employment related to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and engage students in assessing post-school options;
4. advise students, parents and school staff during the transition planning regarding current labor market information, community resources and other community-based services, such as Independent Living Centers;
5. contribute to transition planning by communicating with school-based staff so that students, parents and school district staff can avail themselves of the ACCES-VR counselors' expertise in post-school options;
6. develop the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) prior to school exit that outlines the student's employment goal and the services necessary to achieve the employment goal;
7. provide transition services beyond the scope of special education if they are within the scope of VR services; and
8. provide employment-related services to assist students with disabilities to obtain an employment outcome in the most integrated employment setting consistent with the individual's unique employment factors.

The policy is intended to provide information about the requirements, roles and responsibilities of VR in preparing students with disabilities for successful employment.

VR and State Education Agency Agreement

ACCES-VR and the OSE are updating the Memorandum of Understanding (the 1992 Joint Agreement Between the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities and the Office Of Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education to Improve Transition Planning and Services for Students with Disabilities) between the two offices for the provision of transition services. During the last two years SED has made several organizational changes which included name changes for each of these offices. The new interagency agreement will reflect the organizational name changes for ACCES-VR and OSE and outline the responsibilities of each entity.

Presently, the basic principles of the agreement state that:

- school districts have the primary planning and programmatic responsibilities for the provision of transition services for their students.
- school districts are financially responsible for transition services mandated for school districts by federal or state laws and regulations.

- ACCES-VR is fiscally responsible for providing VR services that are not otherwise mandated through special education requirements, in accordance with ACCES-VR vocational rehabilitation policy.
- special education is responsible for the coordination of educational programs and services for students with disabilities in preparing students for post school living, learning and working.
- referrals to ACCES-VR will be made on the basis of clearly defined functional criteria and referral procedures. A system will be established to evaluate outcomes and employment success for the in-school referrals made to ACCES-VR.
- ACCES-VR District Office staff will be informed of students who require transition services and will have the opportunity to participate in the transition planning for such students.
- OSE and ACCES-VR will work in collaboration with school districts and other State agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to the provision of transition services and to eliminate the duplication of assessments, services and reporting.
- ACCES-VR will work in collaboration with Independent Living Centers to enhance their role in working with students with disabilities, their families and educational personnel during the transition planning and service delivery process.
- the student and, as appropriate, the student's family are a primary source of information regarding the student's needs, goals and services.

The updated interagency agreement is expected to be developed during 2012. This agreement will reflect VR federal requirements and provide an overview of the purposes, objectives and responsibilities of each office in the transition process. The future interagency agreement between ACCES-VR and OSE will include:

- the provision of 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 ACCES-VR and OSE for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- the roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and,
- procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who are in need of transition services.

Local Level Coordination and Collaboration

The ACCES VRCs conduct a range of activities that are coordinated with the high schools to promote the transition of youth from school to employment. These VRC activities may include:

- creating a liaison relationship with over 1,000 high schools;
- conducting orientation, accepting school referrals and meeting with students on-site for intakes and transition planning at high schools;
- scheduling after-hours parent meetings;
- participating at transition career fairs and high school open houses;
- participating at local high school college nights hosting workshops on post-school planning, planning for post secondary education or training and other outreach transition activities;
- participating at college programs held on college campuses;
- participating in orientation programs on ACCES-VR for junior and senior high school students to assist prospective consumers on making an informed choice about an application for VR services;
- determining eligibility and working with students, families and school personnel to develop an original IPE;
- attending Committee of Special Education meetings as appropriate;
- participating in transition forums hosted by community rehabilitation providers;
- participating in local Youth Councils affiliated with the Workforce Investment Boards;
- participating at transition conferences;
- developing partnerships with community providers in regions to engage in all related transition activities;
- developing partnerships with non-community providers (business, county youth programs, youth councils, the PTA, pre-vocational programs);
- participating in local college consortiums;
- engaging other State partners such as local Developmental Disabilities Services Organizations, the Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities and the Office of Mental Health.

State Level Coordination and Collaboration

Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Centers (RSE-TASC)

The RSE-TASC was established by OSE to act as a coordinated statewide network of special education technical assistance centers. RSE-TASC provides technical assistance to school districts to improve core instructional programs that research has shown to be effective for students with disabilities. Each RSE-TASC includes regional Transition Specialists who provide training and technical assistance to groups of school districts across the region and to school districts identified as needing assistance with transition planning and services.

ACCES-VR has identified VR staff as liaisons to each of the RSE-TASC Transition Specialists. The ACCES-VR District Office managers are meeting with each RSE-TASC to educate school districts about VR services and to provide assistance to school districts in coordinating with agencies that provide post-school and employment services. The ACCES-VR Policy and Partnership unit collaborates with OSE Policy and Professional Development units to ensure the RSE-TASC transition specialists and the ACCES-VR District Office managers deliver a consistent statewide message.

Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential - OSE developed a high school exiting career skills credential as a replacement to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) diploma for students with significant disabilities who have taken the New York State Alternate Assessment. The credential will document a student's achievement against the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Learning Standards, including the student's skills, strengths and levels of independence in academic, career development and foundation skills needed for post-school living, learning and working.

ACCES-VR assisted OSE in obtaining public comment about the policy framework and proposed documentation requirements for this credential prior to being formally adopted by the New York State Board of Regents. OSE staff met with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) several times on the proposed credential and both ACCES-VR and the SRC provided comments and recommendations to OSE.

Advisory Councils - There is cross-representation of ACCES-VR and OSE on their respective Advisory Councils. ACCES-VR is represented on the Commissioner's Advisory Panel for Special Education Services, which functions in an advisory capacity to the OSE and advises the Board of Regents, Governor, Legislature and Commissioner on unmet needs in the education of children with disabilities. Its responsibilities are prescribed by section 4403 (6) of the State Education Law in accordance with section 612 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

OSE is represented on the SRC which functions in an advisory capacity to ACCES-VR and advises the Board of Regents, Governor, Legislature and Commissioner on the employment of individuals with disabilities as required by the 1992 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act.

State Plan Priorities and Goals

ACCES-VR's priority for youth establishes separate goals for youth in its annual State Plan goals and priorities to achieve an increase in quality employment outcomes.

Goal 1.1.2: Increase the total number of youth (applicants prior to age 22) that achieve an employment outcome.

Performance for FFY 2010: 4,318, an increase from FFY 2009

Performance for FFY 2011: 4,504, an increase from FFY 2010

- **Results:** ACCES-VR effectively assisted youth in transition. This particular indicator increased (+186) in FFY 2011. This is the fifth year that ACCES-VR is reporting the results for this goal related to its priority on quality employment. Youth accounted for approximately 37 percent of the overall employment outcomes. It is likely that the results of this indicator have been affected by the collaboration of the ACCES-VR counselor with students, families and school personnel. The results show that continued collaboration with schools and work experience for students are essential benchmarks of successful transition to work.

Goal 1.2.2: Increase the percentage of youth with disabilities (applicants prior to age 22) exiting the VR Program after receiving services that achieve an employment outcome and exceed the national standard of 55.8 percent.

Performance for FFY 2010: 42.5 percent does not meet the standard

Performance for FFY 2011: 46.9 percent does not meet the standard

Target FFY 2012: Meet the RSA Performance Standard of 55.8 percent.

Results: This employment goal for youth has increased this past federal fiscal year by 4.4 percentage points. While the percentage of youth at application who had previously achieved an employment outcome after receiving services exceeded the standard and increased for three consecutive years (FFY 2006 through FFY 2008), the downturn in the economy combined with a significant increase in the number of youth participating in VR services resulted in a high number of status 28 closures during FFY 2011 (5,101).

Program improvement strategies include:

- developing stronger local partnerships with school districts and postsecondary institutions, particularly through local transition and postsecondary consortiums;
- using volunteer experiences and paid employment to develop work experiences for youth and experiential learning through summer, part-time and temporary work experiences; and,
- working collaboratively with other state agencies and community organizations with programs that serve transition-age youth to establish participation in ACCES-VR services and other ongoing support services necessary for sustaining employment.