

STATE STRATEGIES AND USE OF FUNDS

This is a description of the strategies intended to improve the number of employment outcomes, the percent of individuals achieving an employment outcome; the number of individuals achieving an employment outcome at or above minimum wage; the service rate to individuals with the most significant disabilities; the service rate for minority individuals; and the employment outcome rate for minority individuals.

Based on the themes of the WDVR and WRC needs assessment activities and the WDVR FFY10 annual goals and priorities, these strategies are intended to improve the performance of the DSU with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to section 106 of the Act.

4.11(d) (1) (A) Strategies and methods used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities

and,

4.11(d)(1)(D) Strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluating standards and performance indicators

Priority #1: The DSU shall assist eligible individuals, including individuals with a significant disability, to obtain, maintain, or regain high quality employment.

Goal 1.1. To increase the total number of individuals who achieve a successful employment outcome. (Performance Indicator 1.1): Target: 2800 successful employment outcomes in FFY 2010. To achieve this goal the DSU will use the following strategies:

- Due to the availability of state match and ARRA funds, throughout FFY10, the WDVR has increased capacity to serve eligible applicants. During FFY10 the DSU anticipates maintaining immediate access to employment plan services for eligible applicants with the most significant disabilities, and a wait period of no longer than 6 months for those with significant disabilities. An indeterminate wait for services will continue for individuals determined to have non-significant disabilities. The WDVR will incrementally increase the IPE caseload from a monthly baseline of 14,100 in October 2009 to slightly more than 17,500 by the end of September 2010. By significantly increasing the total number of individuals accessing WDVR employment services, despite a challenging economy and high unemployment rates, WDVR anticipates that the total number of WDVR consumers achieving a successful employment outcome in FFY10 will exceed the number of successful outcomes in FFY09.

Goal 1.2. To increase temporary work, paid internship and on-the-job training opportunities for job ready DVR consumers and for transition students before they leave school. (Performance Indicator 1.1) Target: In FFY10 at least 50 high school students will engage in temporary work that will evolve into a successful employment outcome and at least 200 job-ready DVR consumers will engage in paid internships or an on-the-job training hire that will evolve into a successful employment outcome.

- In FFY 10 and FFY11 WDVR will use ARRA funds to provide On-the-Job Training (OJT) affirmative hiring incentives to private sector employers who hire and provide temporary as well as permanent work opportunities to WDVR consumers. The WDVR will also support paid OJT internships within state agencies willing to hire and provide temporary as well as permanent employment opportunities to WDVR consumers. The goal of the OJT affirmative hiring and paid internship initiatives is to increase on-the-job training hires and resume building opportunities in the private as well as public employment sectors. Another purpose is to affirmatively target and increase the number of qualified candidates with significant disabilities in the employer's pool for permanent hires.
- The DSU will continue in FFY10 to strengthen employment linkages for high school students by developing local employment-focused collaborations between the school district, the local workforce investment system, private sector employers and community rehabilitation programs.

Goal 1.3. Increase the percent of all individuals receiving services who achieve a successful employment outcome. (Performance Indicator 1.2) Target: 55.8% successful rehabilitation rate. To achieve this goal the DSU will use the following strategies:

- Identify causes leading to the closure of cases rehabilitated and not rehabilitated after receiving services identified in the IPE. The DSU will conduct reviews and analysis of cases closed after receiving VR services to identify critical factors leading to successful rehabilitation.
- Implement an Internal Quality Assurance review of open cases receiving IPE services to identify "at risk" cases matching the pattern of cases closed not rehabilitated. Once identified staff will be able to appropriately intervene to increase the number of cases successfully rehabilitated.
- Continue in FFY10 to utilize WDVR service delivery teams and effective contact and follow up techniques to increase the ability of WDVR staff to maintain follow-along and follow-up with consumers throughout the case process.
- The DSU and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to study the state's transportation systems. The results of the analysis were used in FFY08 to develop agreements between transportation systems, develop new systems when necessary and implement other activities and actions that lead to improved coordination and availability of transportation for consumers across agencies, programs, transportation systems, and city/county lines. It is expected that these efforts will improve employment opportunities for consumers by expanding the geographic scope of their employment

Goal 1.4. Increase the percent of consumers that are successfully rehabilitated whose income from employment is their primary source of support. (Performance Indicator 1.6) Target: 1,484 for FFY10 (based on RSA goal of 53% of those individuals achieving competitive employment in RSA Performance Indicator 1.3). To achieve this goal the DSU will use the following strategies:

- Provide career and benefits counseling to increase the number of consumers seeking and achieving full time competitive employment as the outcome of the vocational rehabilitation process.
- Work with providers of benefits counseling to refocus the emphasis of benefits counseling towards identifying the short and long term gains of substantial gainful employment.
- Collaborative with the Division of Employment and Training (DET) on expanding employer-based training in demand areas of employment, and increasing career-ladder opportunities and earnings for new and incumbent workers with disabilities.
- Continue to promote demonstration authority and demonstration initiatives with the Social Security Administration (SSA) and HHS Center for Medicaid and Medicare, such as Making Work Pay (MWP), the expansion of Wisconsin's Medicaid Purchase Plan (MAPP), Wisconsin's SSDI \$2/\$1 earnings waiver, and other initiatives that reduce disincentives to maximizing employment capacity and earnings.

Priority #2: To maintain a service rate for minorities that achieves or exceeds the RSA target rate of .80

4.11(d)(1)(B) Outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

4.11(d)(1)(D) strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators

Priority 2 To maintain a service rate for minorities that achieves or exceeds the RSA target rate of .80.

Goal 21. The DSU will continue to make this target group a priority for outreach and service delivery during FFY 10. (Performance Indicator 2.1) In addition, DSU data indicates that the success rate for this group of consumers currently lags behind the success of non-minorities. To achieve the desired service delivery rate and to increase successful employment outcomes for WDVR minority consumers served, the DSU will use the following strategies:

- Increased emphasis in the identification, referral and provision of effective vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities who are also a member of a minority group in the following geographic areas: Milwaukee, Madison, Wausau, and the Native American tribal communities. These areas represent significant pockets of individuals with disabilities who are African American, Hispanic, Hmong and Native Americans.

The DSU will maintain a focus on multicultural service and training and linguistic access to DSU information and services. The DSU has identified its vital documents and these are available in Spanish and Hmong, as well as alternate formats, including large print, audio tape and Braille. The DSU has a contract with a vendor that can provide translation of documents and program information into many languages (i.e. Russian, Albanian, Italian, etc.) The DSU continues to monitor its publications and other information to ensure that the list of vital documents remains current and that information that is needed to access services is available in other languages and in alternate formats.

During FFY10 program revenue will continue to be provided to the DSU from the Native American Gaming Initiative (NAGI) fund, for programs and services for Native Americans with disabilities at or near reservations. The DSU will use these funds to match federal funds, and to allocate the funds to Section 121 funded tribal programs, for the delivery of a variety of benefits to the Native American population in Wisconsin.

The DSU houses two Native American Outreach Workers who are co-located in Milwaukee offices. These outreach workers are employees of the Great Lakes Intertribal Council (GLITC). The DSU provides administrative support and trains and mentors the workers to increase the number of referrals, facilitate Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) with cultural sensitivity to Native American services and values and increase employment outcomes of Native American Indians. Census figures reveal that there are more Native American Indians living in the metro-Milwaukee area than on all the combined reservations in Wisconsin. Results indicate that the presence of Native American outreach workers has had a positive increase on referrals. IPE's may be jointly developed with the input of the consumer, Native American workers and DSU staff.

The DSU has undertaken initiatives to serve the state's rapidly increasing Latino/Hispanic populations. In Milwaukee, the DSU is co-located in a job center operated by United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS), a Latino human service organization. The DSU and UMOS staffs collaborate in areas of service provision to welfare-to-work recipients with disabilities and on disability related access issues to the unique services provided by each agency. Other WDVR offices have hired bilingual counselors. These efforts are aimed at increasing and improving outreach and service delivery in three of the largest Latino/Hispanic communities in Wisconsin. When the DSU does not have access to a staff member who is fluent in the native language of the consumer, the DSU also utilizes language translation services. The DSU agrees that

language barriers pose a challenge to the delivery of DVR services and that staff must take the time and make the effort to surmount language barriers and achieve a full understanding of the DVR process. The DSU uses the Spanish version of the Client Assistance Program DVR process chart to assist consumers in understanding the DVR processes and where their responsibilities lie.

Priority #3: To initiate employment plan services in a timely manner following eligibility determination for persons with the most significant disabilities and those with significant disabilities.

Goal 3.1. The DSU will manage its statewide caseload by continuing to use the monthly caseload projection tool. Monthly monitoring of actual caseload activity and expenses against projections stabilizes the WDVR case aids budget and Order of Selection wait list. Monthly monitoring and incremental adjustments allow WDVR to continue to meet its FFY10 goal of immediate activation of employment plans for persons determined to have the most significant disabilities and a wait of no longer than 6 months to begin employment plan development for persons with significant disabilities. As previously noted, the wait for persons determined to have disabilities is indeterminate in FFY 2010. Maintaining our ability to manage our OOS with timely activations also helps the DSU achieve goals 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 2.1.

Priority #4: To increase employment opportunities for consumers needing supported employment.

Goal 4.1. The DSU will continue to develop and implement activities leading to increased supported employment opportunities by using the following strategies (Performance Indicator 1.1):

- During FFY09 and FFY10 WDVR will work collaboratively with the Department of Health Services and Medicaid Infrastructure Grant programs to increase statewide supported employment resources. Efforts will focus on increasing access to supported employment services (SES) and long term employment supports (LTES) and financial coordination of these services among funding sources such as Wisconsin's county-based Family Care services. Training activities will aim to increase the number of supported employment providers in targeted areas of the State who provide integrated community-based SES and LTES in lieu of facility-based employment
- As appropriate to the employment outcome of the individual plan for employment, the DSU will provide supported employment services for consumers who have a self employment or small business vocational goal.

- Strategies to improve supported employment services to youth in transition from high school to VR services and employment

During FFY10 the DSU will continue to explore and expand mechanisms for delivering services specified under the Transition Agreement with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

The DSU and DPI interagency coordination agreement has been expanded to include the Department of Health Services, Division of Long Term Care. This Division has responsibility for the Family Care long-term supports funding Project in Wisconsin. Expanding the DVR/DPI agreement to include Family Care improves the ability to better coordinate resources and serve students needing long term supports.

During FFY 10 the three agencies will coordinate the development of the WDVR IPE, the high school transition IEP and the Family Care Individual Service Plan (ISP). This collaboration is anticipated to increase the funding available for transition students who need long term supported employment services upon transition from high school to community living and employment.

Strategies that result in successful employment outcomes for youth in transition from high school remain a high priority for the WDVR. In FFY10 at least 50 high school students will engage in temporary work or paid internships that will evolve into a successful employment outcome after they graduate from high school.

4.11(d)(1)(A) methods for providing a broad range of assistive technology services and devices on a statewide basis to individuals at each stage of the rehabilitation process

One of the major needs in the area of assistive technology is to disseminate information to VR consumers and DSU staff about techniques, devices and services that have been effective in helping consumers achieve employment outcomes. The DSU collaborated with both UW-Stout and UW-Milwaukee on a project designed to analyze assistive technology needs and available statewide resources. The project involved consumer, staff and provider surveys as well as the development of a statewide resource inventory. The survey results were delivered in FFY '07. The DSU is using the survey results to identify changes, if any, that should be made to the Assistive Technology services or resources delivered by the DSU. In FY10 clarification and guidance for staff will be provided based on the results of the statewide survey.

The need for assistive technology is assessed and provided for throughout the VR process. At intake consumers routinely provide information on accommodation needs. At eligibility and order of selection determination the Functional Assessment Rating includes the impact of existing assistive technology and the need for assistive technology as a "requires services" issue. Information gathered at intake and during eligibility/OOS determination is updated and discussed in the development of the IPE.

Unanticipated needs for assistive technology, particularly when the consumer obtains employment, are addressed with IPE amendments.

4.11(d)(1)(B) Outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

and,

4.11(d)(1)(D) strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators

In addition to outreach procedures to identify and serve members of ethnic and minority groups noted previously in priority #2, the DSU will direct emphasis and agency resources to the provision of services to consumers who are identified as those with the most significant disabilities, those who are most difficult to place into employment, and youth in transition from high school as other groups considered to be underserved.

During FFY 10, the DSU will continue to collaborate with stakeholder partners and invest in services to address the following needs:

- Expanding OJT internships and employment opportunities, job development and placement services for job-ready DVR consumers.
- Increasing employment outcomes for persons with the most significant and significant disabilities by promoting paid internship experiences in state government.
- Expanding and improving services to youth in transition from high school.
- Expanding and improving the provision of natural supports in supported employment to reduce the reliance on state and county funding of long term employment support.

As needed to deploy new strategies and expand services, The DSU will formally collaborative with public partners and fund innovation and expansion initiatives.

Due to continued high demand for DVR services, the DSU has been operating under an Order of Selection for several years. The DSU and WRC recognize that due to the inordinate length of time from eligibility to service, eligible applicants who are waitlisted constitute an "underserved group of individuals". Funding patterns and caseload trends inform management on activations from the waiting list. Case service dollars will be used to the maximum extent possible to decrease the number of eligible applicants waitlisted and, for those who are waitlisted, the length of time they wait for services.

The DSU continues its efforts to expand services to unserved and underserved groups with the most significant disabilities.

During FFY10, the DSU will continue to place a priority on serving persons with the most significant and significant disabilities in a timely manner. The DSU will continue to maintain immediate activation of employment plans for persons determined to have the most significant disabilities and anticipates a wait of no longer than 6 months to begin employment plan development for persons with significant disabilities. An indeterminate wait remains for eligible applicants determined to have non-significant disabilities.

The DSU acknowledges the requirements of the General Education Provision (GEPA) Section 47 and the need to have equitable access and participation in the DSU program service delivery system for individuals with special needs. In addition, the DSA has a statewide work group with representation from the DSU to provide services to Limited English Speaking individuals who are often unserved or underserved due to language barriers.

The DSU continues to provide vocational rehabilitation services to farmers with disabilities who have traditionally been underserved by the agency. Activities carried out under a fee-for-service arrangement with Easter Seals Wisconsin to provide services to farmers with disabilities include farm site assessments, rehabilitation technology assessments, agribusiness self-employment plans and financial analysis of farm operations. The DSU has received statewide and national recognition for this program. In FFY 09, the DSU completed a resource manual and implemented self-employment training for DSU staff working to assist farmers in achieving IPE goals.

The DSU will maintain its MOU with the Department of Public Instruction in FFY'10 and will continue assignment of a liaison counselor to each of the secondary high schools in the state. DSU and high school staff have been trained on the collaborative and cooperative elements of the updated DVR/DPI/DHS MOU. DSU staff participate in individual education plan (IEP) meetings and incorporate WDVR transition services in the plans with the goal of having an approved WDVR individual plan for employment (IPE) before the individual graduates from high school. Successful IEP to IPE coordination provides a seamless transition to WDVR services upon post- secondary matriculation.

The Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council is involved in the discussion, development and monitoring of DSU initiatives to improve services to individuals with disabilities who are considered underserved or unserved. DSU staff provide presentations at council meetings on services to target groups, policy changes and jointly holds public hearing meetings to solicit state plan input. Council members serve on the DVR Policy Academy that is charged with reviewing current policy and recommending changes to policy.

4.11(d)(1)(C) the plan for establishing, developing or improving Community Rehabilitation Programs:

The DSU actively works with community rehabilitation programs to identify new services, new patterns of services, and methods of payment. Based on feedback from

the Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council, VR counselors, service providers and consumers, the DSU has identified a need to improve the provision of effective job development services for consumers with the most significant disabilities and multiple barriers to placement. These individuals are referred to as "the most difficult to successfully place into employment".

The DSU continues to utilize technical specifications and fee schedules in the provision of services provided by Community Rehabilitation Programs including: job development, supported employment, job coaching, benefits analysis, and vocational evaluation. In addition, the DSU offers regular meetings with vendors of these services for feedback, clarification and ongoing compliance and improvement of services.

Due to a very challenging economy and high unemployment rates, in late FFY 09 the DSU developed an OJT affirmative hiring initiative to assist employers with the initial cost of training a hired WDVR job-seeker. WDVR area managers trained CRP job-placement staff on the use of the OJT initiative. CRP job placement staff are encouraged to use the OJT initiative when they speak to employers about hiring WDVR job-seekers.

The DSU senior management meets with management representatives of the CRP community at least twice a year to provide updates and to discuss ways to improve the DSU/CRP service delivery relationship.

The DSU will conduct an annual training for community rehabilitation programs on service provision and contractual requirements during FFY10.

4.11(d)(1)(D) Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide work force investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities

Workforce Investment Act Partners:

To assure that individuals with disabilities have access to the full range of services provided by the other Workforce Investment Act partners, the DSU has identified strengthening WIA partnerships as a major goal. DVR is colocated as a partner in 11 Comprehensive One Stop Job Centers in the state. Colocation operating agreements exist with WIA partners. In addition to the 11 comprehensive One Stop Job Centers, DVR has 30 additional service locations throughout Wisconsin. The DSU provides training and technical assistance to One-Stop Job Center partners in serving individuals with disabilities and developing a greater awareness of programmatic and access needs.

The DSU actively participates with the DWD Division of Employment and Training (DET) in implementing the state's Workforce Investment Grant and in supporting the Disability Navigator Program projects and the Governor's Grow Wisconsin initiatives. Wisconsin has been a national leader in developing Job Center accessibility assessments and resolutions to accessibility issues.

The DSA enters into a statewide MOU with the other entities that are partners in the One-Stop Service Delivery System under Title 1 of the Workforce Development Act. The DSA replicates the agreement throughout Wisconsin in cooperation with 11 local Workforce Investment Development Boards. The DSU also enters into a memorandum of understanding and One Stop Job Center Operating Agreement with each of the 11 Local Workforce Investment Boards in Wisconsin. The DSU's MOU addresses operation of the One-Stop service delivery system including a description of services and methods for referrals. The DSU works collaboratively with One-Stop partners on common intake, interagency referrals, and to facilitate job placement with employers.

The DSU's consumers utilize an employer match website and database offered by Job Service. In FFY10 collaboration will focus on maximizing the benefit of this web-based employer match resource for job-seekers with disabilities and to link and promote WDVR employer services on the Job Center of Wisconsin website.

Through the DSA statewide and local MOUs with the One-Stop Partners and Job Center network and the DSU WDA-level MOUs, the requirements of 34 CFR Part 361.23(b) are satisfied.

4.11(2)(C) Strategies to Overcome Identified Barriers Relating to Equitable access to and Participation of Individuals with Disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.

The DSU recognizes that individuals with a disability often face barriers and disincentives in terms of accessing employment services. The DSU works collaboratively with other partners to help consumers overcome these barriers. Some of these activities are described elsewhere in this plan.

One barrier that prevents consumers from accessing supported employment services is the limited long-term support dollars available some counties that have not yet engaged in Wisconsin's Family Care long term support program. For individuals in need of supported employment services in these counties, WDVR, in concert with other partners, is promoting long term employment supports using alternative funding or no funding. WDVR promotes identifying employers who will subsidize the costs of training; the use of natural workplace supports, and other creative funding of workplace supports, including consumer self-funding of supports through a PASS plan.

As Wisconsin's Family Care, a county-based long term care program, is expanded throughout Wisconsin, the DSU is pursuing the use of Family Care funding as a new long term employment support resource. The DSU will continue in FFY'10 to collaborate with the Department of Health Services Division of Long Term Care (DLTC) to identify and implement alternative strategies to providing long term employment supports concurrent with the expansion of Family Care services throughout Wisconsin.