RESULTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT
OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES
AND THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY
REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

The Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) conducts an annual update to the
statewide assessment of the rehabilitation (and other) needs of individuals with disabilities
residing in the state. The comprehensive statewide assessment process also includes an
annual review of Wisconsin disability statistics, DVR customer and service federal report
data, and public comment and input provided to the Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council (WRC)
throughout the year.

This attachment also includes input received during public hearings conducted by DVR and
WRC during May 2014 regarding FFY15 State Plan. DVR instituted a broader public hearing
process, utilizing video conferencing equipment available throughout the 11 regions of
Wisconsin. Residents throughout the state would be within easy travel distance to the 11
sites to provide testimony in person, via video conferencing equipment, connecting to the
central site located in the Wisconsin capital city.

The DVR and the Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council (WRC) will continue to work cooperatively
in this process. The identified rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities are discussed
with the full council. The DVR and WRC identify and prioritize the rehabilitation needs and
develop DVR systemic and service delivery goals to address the needs.

The WRC also continues to use feedback received from the customer satisfaction survey
conducted in 2013 of individuals closed in the previous calendar year and information from
previous focus groups for process improvements and quality assurance.

Since FFY 08 and continuing through FFY 15, individuals with a “most significant disability”
received service immediately upon their eligibility and OOS determination and this group is
anticipated to continue to experience no wait for services in FFY 15. Individuals with a
“significant disability” had a wait of approximately 5 months in FFY 14. As of April 2014, the
wait for individuals with a "significant disability" was under 4 months. DVR anticipates that if
current funding and staffing levels continue that during FFY15 there will be no wait for
individuals with a "significant disability". Individuals with other disabilities have been and will
remain on an indefinite wait list in FFY 15.

The lack of sufficient resources to serve all eligible applicants means that the needs
assessment updating efforts are focused primarily on the rehabilitation needs of those with
the most significant and significant disabilities. The major needs assessment continued focus
for FFY15 relates to the anticipated need for additional integrated community living and
employment opportunities and supports for those with the most significant disabilities.

The expansion of Family Care, Wisconsin’s managed care system for individuals in the long-
term care system has revolutionized the long term support system. Every individual must be
provided with choices in where they wish to live and work. In the Medicaid Waiver,
Wisconsin offered a definition of "prevocational services" which indicated that any individual
participating in prevocational services must be working toward eventual employment in the community with services supporting that intention. Over the past few years, the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant provided grants to 18 Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) to support a community employment rebalancing initiative. Through these grants CRP’s were encouraged to move their organization from the provision of self-contained prevocational employment services towards the provision of community-based pre-vocational employment services and supports. As a result of these initiatives, DVR experienced a significant increase of referrals of individuals seeking competitive employment in an integrated setting. The 18 organizations, provided with training and support, are to serve as mentors to other prevocational service providers in the state.

Due to the expanded availability of Medicaid-funded long term employment support services and the updated Wisconsin Medicaid Waiver policies emphasizing integrated community employment opportunities, the DVR anticipates a continued increase in demand during FFY15 for supported employment referrals, placements and services. The DVR supported employment and long term employment supports service planning and coordination efforts are described in state plan attachments describing supported employment services and funding.

Wisconsin DVR continues to address the needs identified in the previous plan and have maintained them as priorities for FFY 15. They are:

1. **Rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities.**
   
   - Transportation continues to be identified in multiple ways, both for rural and urban consumers, within cities, across multiple jurisdictions and as an adjunct to transition, social and recreational outlets, work, and medical and dental care.
   
   - Nutritional needs.
   
   - Better and more consistent access to the long term support services.
   
   - Increased accessible and affordable housing.
   
   - Training opportunities focusing on soft skills needed for work, GED, adult enrichment opportunities, personal safety, financial planning.
   
   - Training that focuses immediate labor market needs and that meet current or future economic demands.
   
   - Short term, just in time training.
   
   - Increase in use of On the Job Training (OJT).
   
   - Effective use of labor market statistics and career pathways to allow individuals choices in career options where high growth and demand is anticipated such as the health care industry.
• Effective counseling and guidance both in terms of work, but also to address emotional needs, development of self-advocacy, and positive mentoring to meet life-long goals.

• Recognizing the state’s difficult economic situation, improved job development services including more job coaching services and employer incentives to improve the likelihood of employment of individuals with disability.

• The WRC noted a need for staff and key stakeholder partner training to be conducted in several areas including in the application of the interagency coordination agreement for the delivery of services to transition-aged students, and with community service provider partners in the areas of assessment and job development with a focus on individuals in need of supported employment and long term employment supports.

2. Needs which focus particularly on the service needs of those with significant disabilities, including supported employment.

• Long term support for people who don’t qualify for these supports based on IQ – for example, people with autism or mental health

• Improved job coaching so that coaching can fade in a reasonable and timely way.

• Development of a mentor system for work place role models

• Ability to deal with the basic services before rehabilitation e.g. food shelter, basic medical care.

• Improved use of appropriate work skills evaluation tools

• Support of business community for developing a work environment friendly to individuals with disabilities, e.g. need for part time employment, preservation of benefits, flexibility, volunteer work.

• Support of wrap around services not just on the job, e.g. transportation.

• Improved training and development of qualified social workers in the Wisconsin long term care “Family Care” system who understand vocational needs of individuals

• Need to change the long term support system to a managed care approach to retain and expand funding for long-term supported employment services

• Need to orient the long term care system toward a “money follows the person” approach

• Development of natural supports, in lieu of funded long-term extended services

• Expansion of peer support specialists for individuals with mental illness.
• Informational services regarding various options and programs for families.
• More and better targeted career information to address the attitude that there are no jobs that persons with disabilities can do
• Increased need for soft skill preparation to expand employment opportunities
• Increased education for business community re: the business benefits of hiring our consumers
• Expanded work incentives and increased access to benefits advisement
• Need for expanded work incentive demonstrations to more fully address the number of consumers experiencing disincentive to full employment (e.g., SSDI $2/$1 benefit offset and “Making Work Pay” cost-share demonstration)
• DVR Administrator to continue to provide quarterly updates on the wait list numbers to the Council as recommended.
• DVR develop methods to increase consumer awareness of work incentives and Partnership Plus options and evaluate the impact on outcomes for SSI/DI recipients as the WRC recommended through their observation that employment outcomes for SSI/DI recipients appear to have lower earnings and hours than the general VR population.

3. Rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities who are minorities.

Specific needs identified include:

• Provide training to all VR staff in multicultural awareness;
• Increase VRC expertise to address cross cultural needs;
• Develop awareness in staff of socio-economic issues that are interfering with a person’s ability to stay engaged;
• Develop better methods to identify issues preventing involvement and make appropriate referrals to community resources to consider these issues to increase engagement of individuals in the VR process;
• Culturally competent mental health counseling;
• More Spanish speaking VR and employment and training staff;
• Develop common protocols for employers to address language barriers;
• Develop cooperative programming with the Welfare-to-Work (W-2) staff to address individuals with disabilities (usually in the W-2Transition program) in the W-2 system – the majority of which are individuals of African-American heritage;
• Transportation to jobs in suburbs;
• Skills training to prepare for specific occupations;

• Increased outreach and availability of VR services in areas of the state with the largest concentrations of African-Americans;

• Conduct outreach to recruit potential eligible consumers – e.g. Hmong, Native American;

• For Hmong individuals develop closer working relationships with their clan system to educate clan leaders regarding the VR program, eligibility requirements and services (need permissions for many things: medical evaluations, type of work, etc.);

• Address learning the job through job coaching provided by a Hmong person;

• Build better understanding between employer and employee through mentoring provided by a Hmong person;

• Increase coordination of VR services between the tribal VR agency and DVR, targeting Native Americans not living on or near reservations;

• Develop mentoring services related to crime/poverty to support employment efforts e.g. African American, Native American, Hmong (with specific beliefs or different tribes), and Hmong with their clan structure; and,

• Increase the service rate for minorities as it does not meet the national standard.

4. Rehabilitation needs of individuals who are un-served or underserved.

• Individuals on OOS Waiting List - DVR has addressed the wait list so that in FFY 15 individuals with a most significant disability will continue to be immediately activated. DVR anticipates that individuals with a significant disability will also have no wait for FFY 2015, assuming that our current funding and staffing levels remain the same and that the cost of services change remains at 2% over FFY 2015.

• Reduce the wait list.

• Felons with disabilities.

• Transition students and their families don’t recognize the importance of early DVR involvement.

• Transient or homeless population – inability to contact if no phone or home.

• Long term support for individuals with mental illness.

• People with AODA issues.

• Study job retention – 1, 2, years out.
• Transportation – public and private.

• Caregiver reimbursement.

• People unemployed or laid-off due to recession.

• Older adult workers.

• Minority populations in general.

5. **Rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.**

• Need to increase partnerships with the statewide workforce investment system to develop innovative programs to serve common customers. With the economic downturn, there has been increased funding for dislocated workers and other general workforce populations.

• Ongoing training of job center staff on disability sensitivity issues. The elimination of the Navigator program will impact DVR’s need to provide ongoing training to job center staff.

• Continued efforts to coordinate the efforts of different government agencies with very different rules and expectations for participation. An individual facing parenting responsibilities, poverty, and disability issues needs to work with agencies that can coordinate their efforts.

• Cooperation with job center network is valuable to consumers who can work on certain aspects of their job search independently.

• Need for basic computer skills by consumers to use all resources available. This need has been identified as well in the workforce system. Individuals engaged in manufacturing throughout their career and now attempt to change careers are faced with a skill deficit in use of computers.

• Job readiness classes that focus on how to communicate skills and address their disability to the employer.

• Improve work needs assessment before referring to general programs for employment search.

• Increase job openings on the system

• Continue to expand partnerships and encourage coordination of services

• Development of new ways to provide for job creation or to incentivize employers
• Work cooperatively to remove stigmas in the workplace.

• Use of Customized Employment when appropriate.

6. Need to establish, develop, and/or improve community rehabilitation programs (CRPs).

• Development of more community-based alternatives.

• Focus on integration and removing the “comfort” in sheltered employment

• DVR should be the lead in creating and being the main coordinator of community rehabilitation programs by developing expertise locally of how to best utilize a CRP.

• Enhance current programs to be more culturally sensitive before developing more programs.

• Work with CRP’s to help them change/adjust mission to improve their ability to look at new avenues of services.

• Develop community outreach to other local and neighborhood agencies, centers, clinics, union centers, schools, employers, other social service agencies

• Develop training programs for CRP staff to become more comfortable in community work settings.

• Develop new areas to address behavior or performance issues prior to supported employment or job placement.

• Tracking satisfaction and outcome of VR vendors and service providers, as recommended by WRC

With Wisconsin's USDOE Promise Grant, many of the resources mapped out for family services will now be available for DVR staff to also use for referral to other service that address the non-DVR needs of consumers. This important effort will be on-going throughout the life of the grant but will be maintained by DVR staff upon the grant's completion.