

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

**VI. Program-Specific Requirements for Core State Plan Programs**

**Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

**Program Year 2020**

## **Section a. Input of State Rehabilitation Council**

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

**1. input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council's functions;**

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

SRC Involvement in Planning and Evaluating includes Statewide Focus Groups, Performance Data, and Customer Satisfaction Information. The SRC meets in-person every other month and holds executive meetings on the alternate months. The entire SRC and DBVI staff meet for an all-day combined meeting each June.

### **Highlights of SRC meetings from FFY 2018 and FFY 2019**

**FFY 2018** was an exciting and productive year for the work done in partnership with the SRC and DBVI. The SRC began the year in October 2017 by reviewing the new WIOA Performance Measures. The SRC learned how the new AWARE case management program will capture most of these data to meet the new reporting requirements. The DBVI AWARE system went "live" in September 2017. We also reviewed upcoming goals for the year including plans for the Town Meeting event and statewide consumer satisfaction survey.

In December the SRC meeting included a review and revision of DBVI Goals and Strategies. The membership had many ideas about connecting with partners including the Department of Labor and the Agency of Education. Ideas included continuation of DBVI initiated work experiences with employers. Current results include many individuals bridging from a work experience to employment. Other people learn new skills for their resume. It is also a great way to educate employers about the abilities and assistive technology used by people who are blind. There was also a strong recommendation to collaborate with the DOL work experience and on-the-job training programs. DBVI was also encouraged to find employers who are interested in job carving opportunities where a person can bring their strengths to the employer. The Agency of Education representative also offered many tools available to staff about personalized learning plans and graduation requirements. The Chair of the Policy Committee also updated the SRC about WIOA related DBVI policy revisions that are in process. The meeting ended with a recommendation to have fewer strategies and keep them focused on the key goals.

In February 2018 the SRC dedicated the meeting to updating the goals and strategies based on the Town Meetings, Statewide Consumer Survey, and the CSNA. The meeting began with a review of the WIOA performance measures. Then the SRC

discussed each of the 14 DBVI current strategies. After a detailed discussion about each of the strategies the group made a list of top priorities.

Some highlights from the strategy discussion include ideas about a comprehensive outreach strategy. The SRC believes that DBVI should make efforts to inform key organizations about the services that are available. This includes outreach to businesses, minority groups, and DOL partner programs. They also had ideas about ways to share DBVI planning resources by using some of the channels at AOE like the WIKI Transition page. This resource is well used by school staff and is a good way to share information with LEAs.

In addition to outreach and sharing information the SRC supports DBVI's ongoing efforts to create consumer-driven events and opportunities. The next event will be planned with consumer input and will be held in the fall. A new initiative is to create a listserv that connect clients to share ways they are using technology. There was also interest in creating podcasts that highlight some key technologies and examples of how people use technology to accomplish tasks at work or for independence.

There was an in-depth conversation about the best strategies to connect with the workforce system and American Job Centers and all DOL partners. The intent of the group is that there should be concrete steps and a plan to connect DBVI consumers to these programs and to have a referral process that keeps all partners involved rather than a hand-off to another organization.

One topic that is part of every CSNA is transportation. The SRC is very interested in a new initiative at the VT Department of Transportation that connects travelers with all the resources and potential rides in each area. This is in beta form and is being designed for accessibility. It was decided to invite VTRANS to the SRC meeting in April to discuss the tool.

The meeting ended with a discussion about identifying the top strategies. They include:

- Partnering with all DOL—Implement a plan for staying connected.
- Pre-Employment Transition—Share the DBVI tools that can be used for student transition planning.
- Outreach—Implement a comprehensive plan that includes businesses, eye doctors, and other human service organizations.
- Technology—Create a listserv to connect DBVI consumers and the blind community.

In March 2018, with SRC approval, and public hearings DBVI submitted the Program Section of the Vermont Unified State Plan.

In April 2018, the SRC meeting included a guest speaker from the Vermont Transportation Department. A Transportation Consultant from VT-Trans presented about several new programs recently launched on the "Go Vermont" website. This includes details about a new web-based trip planning website that allows travelers to enter their starting location and destination into a search engine. They then receive results with all the transportation options including fixed routes and on-demand services. There are also several new ride sharing vans and carpool options that can be

accessed through the web portal or by calling a toll-free number to get information. They can assist with matching to find car and van pool options as well as fixed routes and paratransit.

In June 2018 the SRC held a combined meeting with the full SRC and the DBVI staff. The meeting began with a presentation from DBVI staff with a review of recent SRC and DBVI projects that involved the Voice of the Customer. An example shared by DBVI staff was the Employment Guide that was created to create clear expectations for consumers about the Vocational Rehabilitation process and the focus on employment. Many drafts of the Employment Guide were shared with consumers and the SRC to understand and incorporate the Voice of the Customer in the final design. DBVI also reviewed a similar process that was used to create the outreach banners that feature DBVI consumers at their worksites. This agenda topic ended with a preview of the new initiative for using career assessments to help individuals better understand their career interests and strengths. A DBVI team will be working on this throughout the year and they will plan to involve consumers and the SRC for feedback as the process is developed.

The next topic was a discussion about creating a Public Service Announcement. Both organizations believe that this will help to get the word out about how DBVI can help people of all ages reach their employment goals. The idea is to have blind or visually impaired individuals share some of their success story with the intent of letting the public know about these services. We want to make sure that everyone knows that DBVI services can help people reach their employment and independence goals. We then discussed the importance of strong collaboration with the Department of Labor. We want to make sure that DBVI consumers have opportunities for internships and job training through DOL.

**The FFY 2019** began in October 2018 with an SRC meeting that included important partner updates. These included representatives from the Agency of Education, Department of Labor, Special Services Library, Parent Family Network, Client Assistance Program, and the Association for the Blind. These updates are intended to keep the partners connected and informed about important initiatives.

Some highlights from this meeting included a detailed explanation from the AOE representative about the major shift in Vermont High School graduation requirements from traditional credits to Personal Learning Plans. There was also a presentation from the students of the Learn, Earn, and Prosper (LEAP) summer work experience program. The students presented their Public Service Announcement that they created and shared some things they learned about themselves and their future employment goals. One significant idea generated by the SRC was a recommendation to explore if local special education funding could share in the cost for LEAP work experiences.

Several SRC members also participated in White Cane Safety Awareness events that took place across the state. Each event included a simulated walk and education about White Cane Safety. Many local officials also attended.

November 2018 was a busy month and the SRC participated in a couple events. It began with several members attending the Vermont Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind Statewide Conference held in Burlington. The agenda included several guest speakers including a Vermont Transit employee who explained new public transportation initiatives.

Several SRC members also attended the DBVI Great Expectations Consumer Driven Event held in Montpelier. The theme was "Resiliency" and the meeting was planned by DBVI consumers. It included several panel discussions to share experiences and encourage each other.

In November there was also an SRC Executive Council meeting. The Executive Committee meetings are held in the opposite months of Full SRC meetings and are in September, November, January, March, and May. The meetings typically focus on building the agenda for Full Council meetings and other business. There was no Full SRC meeting in December.

In February 2019, the SRC meeting included several partner updates. Some highlights included an update from the Client Assistance Program and their current outreach efforts. Several materials have been developed and they are beginning to visit VR offices and other outreach events. There was also an announcement of the upcoming Technology fair that will be held in Rutland by the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. This will include several technology vendors and equipment demo opportunities for consumers.

The DBVI Director reviewed the SRC 2018 Annual Report and discussed the data and highlights with the group. He also discussed the transition to the new Performance Measures and the ending of the previous Standards and Indicators. A DBVI counselor also presented an update about the Accessible Assessment Project. The DBVI assessment team has identified the core group of vocational related assessments and they are currently adapting them for accessibility. The workstation in Montpelier is complete and includes a computer, assistive software, Braille printer, and scanner.

In April 2019, DBVI staff had an all-day meeting with the staff of the Vermont Association for the Blind and staff of the Veterans Administration. The main purpose was to discuss ways to partner and best serve the needs of Vermont's blind and visually impaired population. This was not specifically an SRC event, but the results and outcomes were shared with the group. One important highlight was the discussion about Low Vision doctors in Vermont. Many are retiring and there is a need to encourage and train new eye doctors to provide this service.

At the April SRC meeting, key partner updates included a recommendation from the AOE representative for members of the SRC and other service provider to sign up for the AOE Weekly Field Services Memo and the Training Modules for Personal Learning

Plans. The representative from the Vermont Family Networks encouraged everyone to help promote the upcoming Youth Summit.

The agenda included an assistive technology demonstration and discussion from one of the SRC members. He presented about several of the apps that he uses and explained the situations when they are most helpful. Some of the apps highlighted were Voice Dream Reader and Seeing AI. The group also discussed several ideas for how to conduct focus groups for the needs assessment to be held in fall 2020.

In June 2019, the SRC held an all-day combined meeting with the DBVI staff. This is an annual event and the agenda for this year included the theme of "Partners in a Vision Rehabilitation Team." The day was structured to invite all DBVI partners and have several workshops so partners could learn about the various roles of other Vision Rehabilitation Team members.

The first sessions included:

- Technology Evaluation and Training;
- Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation and the Employment Consultants Role; and
- The Learn, Earn, and Prosper (LEAP) Summer Work Experience Program.

The second sessions included:

- Vocational Assessments presented by the DBVI Counselor Team;
- Questions and Answers with DBVI Blind Services Counselors; and
- Vermont Association for the Blind and the role of Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapists, Orientation and Mobility Specialist, and Teachers of the Visually Impaired.

The afternoon included a discussion with the SRC that included:

- Outreach to Eye Doctors; and
- The use of social media and the "Front Page Forum" for Outreach.

One key idea was to ask the Outreach Committee to pursue these initiatives.

The public hearing was held on February ?, 2020 at the Waterbury State Office Complex (Rm. 109a). No comments were submitted.

## **2. the Designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and**

DBVI Response to SRC Input:

DBVI and the SRC worked collaboratively to review Statewide Assessment and update Goals and Priorities. The SRC and DBVI agree that outreach efforts and educating the public about blindness is very important. There is also agreement to continue consumer-driven events and opportunities for peer to peer interaction. The SRC

reviewed and gave input on the DBVI section of the statewide assessment, new goals and strategies, as part of the WIOA Unified Plan.

**3. the designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations.**

DBVI agreed with all SRC recommendations.

**Section b. Request for Waiver of Statewideness**

When requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:

**1. a local public agency will provide the non-Federal share of costs associated with the services to be provided in accordance with the waiver request;**

Vermont DBVI is not requesting a waiver of state wideness.

**2. the designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and**

Not applicable.

**3. All State plan requirements will apply**

requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.

Not applicable.

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

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

**1. Federal, State, and local agencies and programs;**

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

**2. State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;**

Not applicable.

**3. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture;**

Not applicable.

**4. Noneducational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and**

Not applicable.

**5. State use contracting programs.**

Not applicable.

## **Section d. Coordination with Education Officials**

Describe:

### **1. DSU's plans**

The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with visual disabilities from school to the receipt of DBVI services, including pre-employment transition services.

The DBVI Director meets regularly with Vermont Agency of Education staff to coordinate services, and include VR, Department of Labor, and the Developmental Disabilities Service.

DBVI made a commitment many years ago to create opportunities for students to prepare for work, vocational training and college. Twelve years ago DBVI created a partnership called the Connections Team. This involved many partners and the mission of the group was to make connections and find ways for students to have meaningful work experiences and job readiness training. The energy of this team created the LEAP program which has grown and expanded each year. With the passage of WIOA in July 2014, the team includes several new partners and connections.

DBVI Blind Services Counselors work closely with all of the Teachers of the Visually Impaired in their region to connect students with Pre-ETS and Transition planning. Vermont is unique because TVI services are provided by one statewide agency that has a contract with AOE and the Local Education Agencies to provide consultation and direct services to blind and visually impaired students. The TVI's work directly with schools and families beginning at birth through high school graduation. DBVI is included on the release form for all students with a disability so TVI's begin conversations about students when they are entering high school. This begins the outreach to include these students in Pre-ETS activities. A letter goes to each family and school districts to explain Pre-ETS and how DBVI can help student with transition to employment.

DBVI staff also participates in local Core Transition Teams across the state. These teams include school staff, mental health providers, employment staff, and VR staff. The intent is to share ideas and resources to develop work experiences, job readiness training, and employment opportunities for students in their region. DBVI is a partner with DVR to sponsor and annual conference that brings all of the regional core teams together.

### **2. Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:**



A. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;

The DBVI Director meets quarterly with the Special Education Director of the Vermont Agency of Education, AOE Transition staff, and VR to coordinate the annual Transition Conference and to provide general updates. A person from the AOE Transition staff is a member of DBVI's SRC. He provides regular updates about school initiatives and resources for transition planning. He recently explained the requirements of the new Personal Learning Plans and how they will be implemented for students with and IEP. AOE, DVR, and DBVI recently developed a new Interagency Agreement as required under WIOA.

B. transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;

DBVI Blind Services Counselors developed and use Action Planning tools for transition planning for the IEP team. The Action Plan is a checklist of activities that need to happen for a student who is visually impaired to meet their transition goals. For example, students who plan to attend college have many action plan items that should occur each year leading up to graduation. The approach is designed for different members of the team to take responsibility for certain action items. Sometimes it is the DBVI Counselor, special educator, TVI, or guidance counselor. The responsibilities are shared and the student is included in all aspects of the planning.

C. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;

Financial responsibilities are laid out in the draft MOU with AOE as follows:

#### *DVR/DBVI Responsibility*

To the extent funds are available, DVR/DBVI are responsible for paying for pre-employment transition services for potentially eligible students. In addition, to the extent funds are available, DVR/DBVI are responsible for paying for vocational rehabilitation and school-to-work transition services for students and youth determined eligible for DVR or DBVI services with an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE.)

#### *AOE and LEA Responsibility*

AOE and LEAs are responsible for paying for any transition services that are also considered to be special education or related services necessary for providing a free appropriate public education to students with disabilities.

#### *Criteria to Determine Which Agency is Responsible to Pay for Similar Services Both Can Provide Under Their Respective Law*

The following criteria shall be used, when determining which entity should pay for a similar service that both entities can provide under their respective laws:

##### *A. The purpose of the Service*

Is the purpose of the service primarily related to an educational outcome or an employment outcome?

##### *B. Customary Services*

Is the service one that the school customarily provides under IDEA part B?

For example, if a school ordinarily provides work-based learning experiences for students with disabilities, the fact those services are now authorized under the Rehabilitation Act as pre-employment transition services does not mean the school should cease providing those services and refer those students to DVR or DBVI.

##### *C. Eligibility*

Is the student with a disability eligible for transition services under IDEA?

Because the definition of "student with a disability" for the DVR and DBVI programs include an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, it is broader than the definition under IDEA. DVR and DBVI are authorized to provide transition services for students with disabilities who meet the definition of an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Nothing in this agreement is to be construed as reducing the responsibility of the local educational agencies or any other agencies under IDEA to provide or pay for any transition services that are also considered to be special education or related services necessary for providing a free appropriate public education to students with disabilities.

D. procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

DBVI Counselors meet with each TVI in their region at the beginning of each school year and during the year to get introduced to each student, family, and school personnel. The TVI caseload includes all students who are blind or visually impaired in the state so DBVI is able to directly outreach to the students and families to promote the Pre-ETS and transition support that is available. DBVI also reaches out directly to local special education administrators and 504 coordinators. DBVI also works collaboratively with DVR transition staff who are in the schools and often refer students to DBVI.

### **Section e. Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations**

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(3)). Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

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

### **Section f. Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services**

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(4)). Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

DBVI works closely with DVR for Supported Employment coordination. DBVI is also part of all the agreements for Supported Employment services, such as agreements with the Division of Disability Services, TBI services, the Department of Mental Health and the local CRT programs. Because of its small size and the fact that it serves a low incidence population DBVI feels that it can serve the few individuals seeking supported employment best in the above manner. Most individuals who qualify for supported employment and are visually impaired are served by other agencies as their primary disability has been identified as other than vision impairment. Most individuals are eligible for Medicaid waivers and DBVI does provide short-term worksite support.

DVR and DBVI have new agreements with the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Services Division (DDSD) to provide extended services for individuals with developmental disabilities. The primary source of funding for extended services for individuals with developmental disabilities is Home and Community—based Medicaid Waiver funds.

## **Section g. Coordination with Employers**

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(5)). Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

### **1. VR services; and**

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

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

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

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

**Opportunities:** Opportunities are defined as any activity, paid or un—paid, offered by a particular business. These activities range from informational interviews and job shadows to short—term work experiences and paid employment. All opportunities are captured for each business. **Contacts:** Contacts are defined as the individuals in a business with whom Employment Consultants and/or Business Account Managers have developed a relationship. In many cases these contacts are Hiring Managers, Owners and Supervisors. **Activities:** Each time an Employment Consultant or Business Account Manager interacts with a contact, an activity note is entered into Salesforce. This allows all Employment Team members to see a running history of conversations and activities with that business.

## **2. transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.**

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

### **Section h. Interagency Cooperation. Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State**

**agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:**

#### **(1) The State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act;**

As Divisions within the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL), DVR and DBVI have entered an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA). The agreement is in effect for five years. The purpose of the agreement is to describe how Vocational Rehabilitation Title I and Title VI-B funding will be utilized with Medicaid Global Commitment funding to support employment services for the following populations:

- Supported employment services for adults with developmental disabilities served through the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) Developmental Disabilities Services Division, hereinafter referred to as DDSD.
- Youth with severe emotional disturbance (SED) served by the Department of Mental Health (DMH), Children’s Division through the JOBS programs.
- Adults with psychiatric disabilities served through the Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) program administered by the Department of Mental Health (DMH).

The agreement sets out the following guiding principles:

DAIL/DVR/DBVI and DVHA are committed to implementing employment services through the blending and braiding of VR Title I and Title VI-B funding with DDSD Global Commitment Medicaid funding. The goal is to support a seamless and well-integrated system to provide employment services for individuals with developmental disabilities, youth with SED and adults with psychiatric disabilities through a statewide network of community providers.

The agreement also lays out eligibility criteria for the respective programs and the financial responsibilities of each State unit as follows:

### **DAIL/DVR/DBVI Responsibilities**

#### **A. Funding of Time-Limited Supported Employment Services**

Except for youth with significant disabilities, DAIL/DVR/DBVI funding of supported employment is time-limited for a period of not more than 24 months. Funded services must be based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an individualized plan for employment. DAIL/DVR/DBVI will fund:

- Supported employment assessment services
- Supported employment job search and placement services
- Supported employment work supports
- Customized employment
- Benefits and work incentive counseling
- Progressive employment
- Case services for additional work supports such as work clothes and transportation

#### **B. Funding for Extended Supports**

Extended services are the ongoing support services that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment, after an individual has made the transition from DAIL/DVR/DBVI time-limited services. Extended services can be funded by DAIL/DVR/DBVI for youth with the most significant disabilities, for a period not to exceed four years. DAIL/DVR/DBVI may not provide extended services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are not youth with the most significant disabilities.

### **DHVA Global Commitment Funding of Employment Services**

#### **A. Developmental Services**

Supported employment and extended employment services are through the Global Commitment, Home and Community Based Medicaid Services (HCBS) for people who meet the eligibility criteria for DDS. DAIL/DDSD

HCBS funding is individualized based on the support needs of the consumer. If the HCBS has a line item for employment, then an employment outcome must be included in the Individualized Support Agreement (ISA). HCBS funding can be used to support both short term assessment, job development, job placement services and extended services.

**B. JOBS Program**

The JOBS program supported employment services and extended employment services are funded through Global Commitment, Medicaid case rate funding administered by DMH. Funds will be provided through the DA Master Grant Agreements.

**C. CRT Evidence Based Supported Employment Services**

CRT evidence-based supported employment services are funded through the Global Commitment, Medicaid CRT Case Rate administered by DMH. Funds will be provided through the DA Master Grant Agreements.

**(2) The State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with Developmental disabilities;**

DVR and DBVI are housed within the same department as the Developmental Disabilities Services Division (DDSD). An Intradepartmental Agreement was developed within DAILE and signed on September 5<sup>th</sup> 2017. The agreement is in effect for five years. The purpose of this agreement is to describe how DVR, DBVI and DDSD will cooperate to implement, expand and improve supported employment services for adults with developmental disabilities in the State of Vermont. Supported employment services for adults with developmental disabilities are provided through a system of approved nonprofit community providers, including the Designated Agencies (DA), the Specialized Service Agencies (SSA) and Independent Service Organizations (ISO). DDSD, DVR and DBVI fund supported employment services jointly through grant and contractual relationships with these community providers.

The agreement sets out the following guiding principles:

DDSD, DVR and DBVI are sister Divisions within DAILE and operate under the direction of the DAILE Commissioner. As such, DVR, DBVI and DDSD take a “one agency” approach to the funding and implementation of supported employment services for adults and youth with developmental disabilities.

DVR, DBVI and DDSD have collaborated for over thirty years to implement supported employment services for adults with developmental disabilities.

DVR, DBVI and DDS are committed to continuing this collaboration based on the following:

- All people with developmental disabilities, who want to, can work with the appropriate supports.
- Work benefits people with developmental disabilities in the same way it does people without disabilities. Increased income, a sense of contribution and skill acquisition, increased confidence, independence and social connections all enable people to develop meaningful careers.
- The value of work extends far beyond wages earned. Employers and the community benefit from the social inclusion and diversity people with developmental disabilities bring to the workforce through improved morale, customer loyalty and overall productivity.

The agreement includes an inter-division planning and policy group that will meet at least quarterly and include all of the Directors. There is a commitment to joint monitoring of supported employment services and joint training and technical assistance. The agreement also describes the eligibility criteria for each program and lays out the fiscal responsibilities as follows:

### **Joint Responsibilities**

DVR, DBVI and DDS are committed to implementing supported employment services through the blending and braiding of VR Title I and Title VI-B funding with DDS Global Commitment Medicaid funding. The goal is to support a seamless and well-integrated system to provide supported employment services for individuals with developmental disabilities through a statewide network of community providers.

### **DVR and DBVI Responsibilities**

#### **A. Funding of Time-Limited Supported Employment Services**

Except for youth with significant disabilities, DAIL/DVR/DBVI funding of supported employment is time-limited for a period of not more than 24 months. Funded services must be based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an individualized plan for employment. DAIL/DVR/DBVI will fund:

- Supported employment assessment services
- Supported employment job search and placement services
- Supported employment work supports
- Customized employment

#### **B. Funding for Extended Supports**

Extended services are the ongoing support services that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in



supported employment, after an individual has made the transition from DVR time-limited services. Extended services can be funded by DVR and DBVI for youth with the most significant disabilities, for a period not to exceed four years. DVR may not provide extended services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are not youth with the most significant disabilities.

C. Availability of Funding

The DVR and DBVI commitment to funding supported employment services is contingent on the availability of state and federal funds. In the event state or federal funds are reduced or eliminated, DVR may reduce or end funding for supported employment services.

**DDSD Responsibilities**

A. Funding for Supported Employment Services and Extended Services

DDSD will fund supported employment and extended employment through the Global Commitment, Home and Community Based Medicaid Services (HCBS) for people who meet the eligibility criteria for DDS. HCBS funding is individualized based on the support needs of the consumer. If the HCBS has a line item for employment, then an employment outcome must be included in the Individualized Support Agreement (ISA). HCBS funding can be used to support both short term assessment, job development, job placement services and extended services.

B. Availability of Funding

The DDSD commitment to funding supported employment services is contingent on the availability of state and federal funds. In the event state or federal funds are reduced or eliminated, DDSD may reduce or end funding for supported employment services.

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

DVR and DMH have a long history of collaboration around the provision of supported employment services for adults with psychiatric disabilities and youth with severe emotional behavioral disorders. This is reflected in the MOU's overview and purpose as follows:

The purpose of this agreement is to describe how DAIL/DVR/DBVI and DMH will cooperate to implement, and improve employment services, supported employment services and evidence based supported employment services for youth and adults with psychiatric disabilities in the State of Vermont.

Supported employment and employment services for youth and adults with psychiatric disabilities are provided through a system of approved non-profit

community providers, including the Designated Agencies (DAs). DMH and DAIL/DVR/DBVI fund supported employment services jointly through grant and contractual relationships with these community providers. There are two primary programs within the DMH system that provide employment services:

- The JOBS Program: JOBS provides supported employment services for youth with Severe Emotional Disturbance (SED)
- The Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) Program: CRT provides employment services and supported employment for adults with severe psychiatric disabilities.

The agreement sets out the following guiding principles:

DAIL/DVR/DBVI/DBVI and DMH have collaborated for over thirty years to implement supported employment services for youth and adults with psychiatric disabilities. DAIL/DVR/DBVI and DMH are committed to continuing this collaboration based on the following:

- All people with psychiatric disabilities, who want to, can work with the appropriate supports.
- Work benefits people with psychiatric disabilities in the same way it does people without disabilities. Increased income, a sense of contribution and skill acquisition, increased confidence, independence and social connections all enable people to develop meaningful careers.
- Employment is an essential component of the recovery process for people with psychiatric disabilities.

The agreement forms an interagency planning and policy development group including the DVR/DBVI Directors and the DMH Directors of Adult Mental Health and Children's Mental Health, and is in effect for five years from date of signature. The agreement also includes a commitment to joint monitoring of the programs and joint training and technical assistance. DAIL/DVR/DBVI and DMH support two models of individualized supported employment services in competitive, integrated employment settings. The agreement describes the eligibility criteria for both systems and the service models as follows:

### JOBS

The JOBS Program is an innovative supported employment and intensive case management service for youth with psychiatric disabilities, who have dropped out or left school. It uses work as a means to reach this challenging population. JOBS is a voluntary program where youth, once engaged, are assisted in

transitioning from school, prison, or the streets and supported in accessing services to help them reach their individual goals and greater independence.

### Individualized Placement and Support (IPS): Evidence Based Supported Employment Services.

IPS supported employment is an evidence-based approach to providing vocational services for adults with severe psychiatric disabilities. IPS integrates employment services within community mental health treatment and case management services.

DAIL/DVR/DBVI and DMH do not support any type of group or segregated employment service model such as sheltered workshops, work crews, enclave placements or any approach that does not result in competitive, integrated employment. DAIL/DVR/DBVI and DMH will promote and support evidence based supported employment as the primary service model, through policy development, contract/grant language, training and technical assistance, and monitoring and quality review.

The agreement describes the fiscal responsibilities of the respective Departments as follows:

#### **Joint Responsibilities**

DAIL/DVR/DBVI and DMH are committed to implementing supported employment services through the blending and braiding of VR Title I and Title VI-B funding with DMH Global Commitment Medicaid funding. The goal is to support a seamless and well-integrated system to provide supported employment services for adults with psychiatric disabilities and youth with SED through a statewide network of community providers.

#### **DAIL/DVR/DBVI Responsibilities**

##### A. Funding of Time-Limited Supported Employment Services

Except for youth with significant disabilities, DAIL/DVR/DBVI funding of supported employment is time-limited for a period of not more than 24 months. Funded services must be based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an individualized plan for employment. DAIL/DVR/DBVI will fund:

- Supported employment assessment services
- Supported employment job search and placement services
- Supported employment work supports
- Customized employment
- Benefits and work incentive counseling
- Progressive employment

- Case services for additional work supports such as work clothes and transportation

B. Funding for Extended Supports

Extended services are the ongoing support services that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment, after an individual has made the transition from DAIL/DVR/DBVI time-limited services. Extended services can be funded by DAIL/DVR/DBVI for youth with the most significant disabilities, for a period not to exceed four years. DAIL/DVR/DBVI may not provide extended services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are not youth with the most significant disabilities.

C. Availability of Funding

The DAIL/DVR/DBVI commitment to funding supported employment services is contingent on the availability of state and federal funds. In the event state or federal funds are reduced or eliminated, DAIL/DVR/DBVI may reduce or end funding for supported employment services.

**DMH Responsibilities**

A. Funding for JOBS

DMH will fund the JOBS program supported employment services and extended employment services through Global Commitment, Medicaid Case Rate funding. Funds will be provided through the DA Master Grant Agreements.

B. Funding for IPS Supported Employment Services and Extended Services

DMH will fund evidence-based supported employment through the Global Commitment, Medicaid CRT Case Rate. Funds will be provided through the DA Master Grant Agreements.

C. Availability of Funding

The DMH commitment to funding JOBS and IPS supported employment services is contingent on the availability of state and federal funds. In the event state or federal funds are reduced or eliminated, DMH may reduce funding for supported employment services.

**Section i. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development**

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.10)). Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State

rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

## **1. Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development**

### **A. Qualified Personnel Needs.**

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

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

The Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) operates in the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL) in the Agency of Human Services (AHS). DBVI employs 11 full-time positions. DBVI is organized to allow a structure for advancement within based on increased professional abilities, knowledge, leadership, improved services and outcomes.

In FFY 2019 DBVI Counselors served 248 clients. DBVI has sufficient VR Counselor capacity to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation clients. DBVI has four regional offices located in Burlington, Montpelier, Rutland and Springfield. Each of the four offices have one Counselor. The Springfield office has an Associate Counselor completing a graduate program with the University of Southern Maine and will obtain a Master of Science in Counseling.

Two Associate counselors completed their Master of Science in Counseling in August 2018 and both were promoted to full-time Rehabilitation Counselors providing rehabilitation services in the Montpelier and Burlington offices. One full-time Associate Counselor position has been added to the Springfield office in 2019 and a second full-time Associate Counselor will be added to the Burlington office due to vacancy in Oct 2019. These added Associate Counselor positions provide increased capacity to serve Pre-ETS students and for development of programs with the Department of Labor (DOL).

Two Rehab Associate positions have divided administrative responsibilities to support the vocational rehabilitation program in the north and south regions of the State of Vermont. These two positions are supervised by the Counselors in the Montpelier and Rutland offices.

The Springfield office has filled the vacant full-time Administrative Services Coordinator position with a full-time Associate Counselor. One Senior Counselor retired in July 2019 and a second Senior Counselor is retiring in February 2020. A VR Counselor II was promoted to Senior Counselor in October 2019. One half-time VR counselor left in October 2019. One Rehab Associate II has been on medical leave since July 2019.

Technology services are provided by the Blind Services Assistive Technology Coordinator and a contracted professional Rehabilitation Technology expert. The

Assistive Technology Coordinator provides services for DBVI clients and covers the entire State. DBVI has two Employment Consultants. This service is contracted through VABIR (Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation). Overall supervision is provided by the Division Director.

ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Total positions</b>	<b>Current vacancies</b>	<b>Projected vacancies over the next 5 years</b>
Blind Services Director	1	0	0
Senior Rehabilitation Counselor	1	0	0
Rehabilitation Associate I	1	0	0
Rehabilitation Associate II	1	0	0
Associate Counselor	2	2	0
Adaptive Technology Coordinator	1	0	0
Rehabilitation Counselor I	2	0	0

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

In FFY 2019 DBVI (4) Counselors served an average of 62 consumers annually. DBVI is prepared to serve a similar average of consumers per counselor for FFY 2020. At this time DBVI has maintained a high level of performance. The recent changes of personnel structure will ensure DBVI clients will be served, including those with significant disabilities, students and adults requesting vocational rehabilitation services. DBVI expects to have one Associate Counselor position upgraded to full time Rehabilitation Counselor over the next couple of years. We have addressed the issue

of Counselors retiring or leaving the field and staffing levels are sufficient. This is due in part to the way the DBVI program is structured, which allows for staff development and advancement. DBVI is proud of its prompt turn-around services and ability to quickly establish eligibility and develop plans for services.

## B. Personnel Development

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

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

(B) Personnel Development needs over the past two years have been address by our relationship with University of Southern Maine. Two DBVI Associate Counselors have completed and a third has enrolled in the USM Counselor Education Graduate Program. It is expected that the third Associate counselor will receive a Master of Science in Counseling. Training and supervision are provided under the guidance of a qualified rehabilitation counselor. Training includes instruction regarding the implications of visual impairment and how to provide expert services for people who are visually impaired and seeking employment.

DBVI is coordinating all educational training with Charles Beracchio, EdD, CRC from the University of Southern Maine. The Master of Science requires students to take a total of fifty-four credit hours. After completion of the program, counselors have the required knowledge needed to work in the rehabilitation field. Classes focus on the medical and psychological aspects that surround people with disabilities in our society. The training teaches students how to promote equality and empower clients. Below is an outline of the program syllabus:

### Core Courses (27 credits)

EDU 600 Research Methods and Techniques  
HCE 605 Psychological Measurement and Evaluation  
HCE 620 Fundamentals of Counseling Theories  
HCE 621 Fundamentals of Counseling Skills  
HCE 626 Group Process and Procedures  
HCE 627 Group Counseling Practicum  
HCE 668 Human Development  
HCE 690 Individual Counseling Practicum Seminar  
HCE 691 Individual Counseling Practicum Laboratory

### Required Concentration Courses (24 credits)

HCE 510 Introduction to Rehabilitation Counseling and Service  
HCE 514 Psychiatric Rehabilitation: Evidence-based Practices and Treatment  
HCE 611 Medical and Psychological Aspects of Disability and Rehabilitation  
HCE 612 Multicultural Counseling: Social & Cultural Foundations of Helping Diverse Families  
HCE 615 Vocational Counseling and Placement in Rehabilitation

HCE 619 Recovery-Oriented Origins of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practice  
HCE 642 Perspectives on Chemical Dependency  
HCE 686 Internship in Counselor Education (6 credits - 600 hours)

Vermont has no accredited graduate school offering a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. To meet the Comprehensive System for Professional Development (CSPD) standards, a Counselor needs either a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a master's degree in a related field plus completion of four additional core rehabilitation courses. To help meet the requirement for education, Assumption College, University of Massachusetts, and Springfield College of Human Services have partnered to provide the required masters level courses to be CSPD qualified. Presently, all DBVI rehabilitation counselors have met the educational requirements.

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

One Associate Counselor is enrolled voluntarily in a master's degree program in Rehabilitation Counseling through the University of Southern Maine's (USM) online, distance learning program funded by an RSA long-term training grant to USM.

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

Two associate counselors completed their master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling in August 2019 and were promoted to VR Counselor I positions. To date, all DBVI rehabilitation counselor completed the CSPD required rehabilitation courses.

## **2. Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel**

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

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



counseling vacancies are considered if they are willing to complete the four core rehabilitation courses.

DBVI also recruits professionals with an expertise in rehabilitation and knowledge of visual diagnoses and the implications of visual disability. State personnel policies require DBVI to consider qualified applicants on the Reduction in Force list before other applicants. DBVI also advertises openings through the State recruitment system, through local newspapers and makes every effort to include individuals with disabilities and minority backgrounds to ensure a diverse qualified professional staff. DBVI also recruits interested and qualified consumers, both past and present, to provide services to Vermonters with vision impairments.

Rehabilitation Associates and Associate Counselors are recruited with a strong preference given to those with bachelor's degrees and a strong commitment to blind services. Rehabilitation Associates or Associate Counselors with a bachelor's degree are encouraged to take the CSPD required master's level courses. They are encouraged to pursue a master's level program in preparation for retention and promotion of qualified personnel. Through flexible work schedules and approved time off, DBVI makes it convenient for staff to pursue advanced degrees and education. DBVI supports staff members who want to further their relevant education.

DBVI supports staff and their professional development through public recognition and opportunities for job advancement through a developed career ladder within the division. New staff participate in comprehensive orientation and training program that covers information appropriate to serving individuals who have vision loss as well as policy and procedure. Trainings address the implications of visual loss and services such as orientation and mobility, rehabilitation teaching, and low vision service. In addition, training and consultation occurs with our rehabilitation technology consultant on an ongoing basis. DBVI ensures a high standard of qualified personnel with training directed toward an expertise for working with people with visual impairment.

### **3. Personnel Standards**

Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and 34 CFR 361.18(c) to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

A. standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and DBVI follows the same standard used by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to be in compliance with Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992. This requires State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to establish qualified personnel standards for rehabilitation personnel. This addresses the qualifications necessary to meet the highest standards which are required in the State of Vermont.

DBVI follows standards set forth in the Comprehensive System for Professional Development (CSPD). This prescribes a national standard for vocational rehabilitation counselor qualifications. This standard gives highest priority to counselors with a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. The second level of priority is for counselors with related degrees in social work, psychology, mental health counseling or special education. This group must complete four additional courses to meet the standard: Foundations of Rehabilitation, Career Counseling, Vocational Assessment and Evaluation, and Medical and Psychosocial Aspects of Disability. All efforts are made to hire new Counselors into this standard. When this is not possible, new hires are required, by written agreement, to attain the standard in a reasonable amount of time. The availability of online course work should allow any new hires to reasonably take the four "core" courses or any other course work they would need to reach this standard.

DBVI has a standard of bachelor's degree for new Rehabilitation Associates and Associate Counselors. This provides the groundwork for moving Associates into graduate programs, helping DBVI maintain qualified staff. Presently all DBVI Rehab Counselor positions are filled by qualified professionals. All staff receive extensive training to help them learn and understand services for visually impaired individuals and the implication caused by visual loss. Training is focused around meeting with other highly trained vision professionals both within DBVI and from our sister agency, VABVI (Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired).

All new employees receive training with a qualified rehabilitation therapist, a low vision therapist and orientation and mobility instructor. In addition, they are scheduled to meet with the rehabilitation technology specialist to learn about how adaptive equipment can enhance job opportunities for consumers. They also meet with professionals from VABIR (Vermont Association of Business Rehabilitation and Industry) to learn about job development and placement. The performance expectations of all newly hired staff are to meet all the expected standards established for the position.

All newly hired staff attend new hire orientation which includes the following required trainings: HIPPA, Preventing and Addressing sexual Harassment in the Workplace, Conflict of Interest, Ethics, and Motivational Interviewing. Existing staff are required to update these trainings periodically.

DBVI allows for flexible work schedules, provides training assistance, supports state, regional and national learning opportunities and is strongly supportive of the time, effort, and commitment expended by each staff member to establish and maintain educational standards. DBVI encourages the use of training funds for staff to use to attain and maintain professional standards and to maintain and enhance their professional capabilities. DBVI seeks and distributes information and training opportunities for staff at the regional and national level. DBVI maintains current educational material through journals, internet sites and information gathered at conferences and trainings. DBVI works with the DVR Staff Development and Training Coordinator to ensure inclusion in opportunities offered by educational institutions for vocational rehabilitation professionals. Opportunities for online and distance learning are also available.

B. the establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

(B) DBVI ensures that personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with visual impairment through our partnership with the Department of Labor (DOL). DBVI is part of the unified plan to meet the requirements of the Workforce Innovation Act (WIOA). Cross trainings with DOL, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Agency of Education are designed to address the needs for adults and students with disabilities. DBVI staff have completed training on Pathways to Promising Careers. DBVI staff have direct access to Vermont DOL's 12 regional Job Centers. DBVI is working closely with the Labor Planning and Support Administrator Youth Program Manager from DOL. Trainings have been arranged for staff to learn about the evolving labor market and programs to assist students with visual impairment. DBVI is partnering with DOL to look closer at apprenticeship programs and on-the-job training opportunities that will produce success in obtaining high wages for our consumers.

DBVI works closely with VABIR (Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation) and Creative Workforce Solutions (local Sales Force boards) to learn information about local employers and progressive employment opportunities. DBVI is planning a staff training in 2020 with Hugh Bradshaw, Vermont DOL. This training will provide counselors with information and skills to match the needs of their consumers with the needs of the local labor market. The training will enhance counselors' abilities to interpret labor market information to assist their consumers to make informed career decisions and effectively work as a team with job placement staff.

Counselors are knowledgeable of training and post-secondary education options that are in demand in the local labor market. Staff are aware of trainings available for high wage, high demand and high growth job opportunities for their visually impaired clients. DBVI stays current in understanding the evolving labor market through collaboration with the Department of Labor.

#### **4. Staff Development.**

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

##### **A. System of staff development**

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

The main objective for staff development at the Division for the Blind focuses on assessment, vocational counseling, job placement and rehabilitation technology in

relation to visual impairment. Training for counselors focuses on the essentials of a comprehensive vocational assessment. This practice addresses how a person with a visual impairment can achieve a high standard of independence through employment. DBVI's mission is to "support Vermonters who are blind or visually impaired in their efforts to achieve or sustain their economic independence, self-reliance, and social integration to a level consistent with their interests, abilities, and informed choice".

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

DBVI has a partnership with the VR Staff Development and Training Coordinator to obtain recommendations on upcoming trainings available within the Agency of Human Services and DVR. Needed trainings are determined through IDP developed by DBVI staff. DBVI staff are encouraged to participate in training opportunities to increase leadership, partnering and collaboration skills that lead to increased employment opportunities for people who are blind and visually impaired.

DBVI continues to expand projects directed toward our younger transition aged students and young adults. DBVI partners with the VR Transition Program Director, the Department of Labor Planning and Support Administrator Youth Program Manager from the Workforce Development Unit, and the Agency of Education Program Coordinator. New initiatives to address services for students who are visually impaired and to ensure they are receiving the Pre-ETS core services. DBVI staff help to create and attend the annual Vermont Transition conference and the Core Transition Event. Counselors are active members of regional Core transition teams and attend meetings and events regularly which provide opportunities to network with other transition aged service providers. DBVI counselors are active in attending and providing information at IEP meetings for students age 14-21. DBVI works closely with Vermont DOL Youth case managers to support students with visual impairment. DBVI staff have and continue to provide training to DOL staff regarding adaptive skill instruction, orientation and mobility, rehab teaching and low vision training to assist with progressive employment.

The project, Great Expectations-Voices and Choices for the Future is a collaborative effort by DBVI, VABVI and VABIR. The purpose of the project is to increase employment and job seeking skills, promote positive mentoring, networking, obtain feedback from clients to improve services and to empower client around self-advocacy and self-reliance. Great Expectations is consumer driven and is accomplished through a series of planning meetings resulting in an annual theme-based event.

DBVI researches and looks at new ways to provide and increase services for transition age youth. DBVI staff receive ongoing training through local and regional in-state programs to stay current on: The National Library Services, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Resources, Diversity and numerous others. DBVI staff is especially diligent about perusing pertinent journals and research and disseminating relevant articles and information via the internet, at monthly staff meetings and through in-person collaborations. The DBVI central office maintains subscriptions to several noted journals in the field (e.g., Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness). DBVI continues to seek ways to improve and enhance collaboration with other agencies through attendance at combined meetings, in-service trainings, and direct staff contact.

DBVI has greatly enhanced its collaboration with other organizations to the benefit of this division. In particular, the LEAP program for summer youth employment is a model of cooperation. This involves DBVI (provider of consumers, funding), Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (infrastructure, staff), Resource (jobs, staff), Linking Learning to Life (follow-up, e-mentoring), VABVI (independent living and O&M trainings, transition staff) and the Gibney Family Foundation (funding). This unique residential program provides youth with vision impairments summer employment opportunities, community service experiences and independent living experiences in an urban setting.

DBVI is active with the CWS (Creative Workforce Solutions), a job development coalition throughout the State of Vermont in concert with VABIR (Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation). VABIR staff assist consumers with job preparation (resume and interview preparation) and help develop progressive employment opportunities for consumers. VABIR staff explain financial incentives and provide ADA information. CWS serves to connect employers to qualified consumers for employment and support access to needed accommodations. CWS works to develop cooperative relationships with area employers for long lasting job matches.

#### B. Acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge

Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

DBVI uses the C3 management model developed by Robin Lawton. This model supports a strong belief and process for a "Customer Centered Culture". This method helps DBVI to identify the "voice of the customer". DBVI continues to use the process of assessing customer satisfaction and organizational performance with the knowledge obtained through extensive training and consultation from Robin Lawton. DBVI has incorporated this model of management into our service delivery and organizational process. Training has been provided to our SRC, the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the DBVI staff.

The main dimensions of the model are: Focus on the customer, eliminate ambiguity, include customer priorities. Empower the end user, define success, reduce ambiguity of language. Link customer and operational priorities. Integrate and leverage existing initiatives, focus on improvement. Address outcomes first, processes last, satisfy strategic objectives as well as operations, improve product knowledge. Emphasize sustainability of new practices and challenge traditional assumptions. Using this model

DBVI strives to improve customer satisfaction as we decrease ambiguity and improve communication. C3 provides a method to measure successful outcomes based on the "voice of the customer".

In 2020 DBVI will be hosting town meetings statewide using C3 to allow a process for hearing the voice of the customer. DBVI will collect and analyze information that will be used in the development of DBVI's strategic planning and service delivery. C3 training and consultation with Robin Lawton have provided DBVI staff with the tools and methodology to improve customer satisfaction and provide a higher level of service.

Using strategies from C3, DBVI created "Your Guide to Employment Services". The guide is given to consumers during the initial interview and contains customer friendly language that explains who we are, our process, includes client success stories and describes the types of services that a person can expect from participating in the employment program. The guide provides information to increase communication and clarity by using common language. DBVI uses input from our customers to ensure information is accessible, comprehensive, empowering, understandable and informative. DBVI continues to develop new tools and enhance the "Guide to Employment Services".

The DBVI team also uses the Franklin Covey management system. "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" has been incorporated into the DBVI team culture to enhance effectiveness, responsibility, personal growth and vision. Our team approach uses a win-win philosophy, which helps to increase understanding and communication. DBVI supports creative cooperation among staff.

Using this both "The 7 Habits of Effective People" and the "Customer Centered Culture" management systems have resulted in teams that are more effective in analyzing, improving and providing services for people who are visually impaired.

The DBVI Division Director meets annually with the four regional teams throughout the state assistive technology teams to discuss and review each team's mission and vision, annual goals and accomplishments.

#### STAFF TRAININGS:

DBVI has partnered with VR to provide training in Motivational Interviewing. All DBVI staff have completed training sessions. This training allows an opportunity for staff to receive feedback and support using the motivational counseling techniques.

DBVI attended a workshop to increase awareness of functional limitations for people who are visually Impaired and best practice for working with our clients. Dan Norris from the Vermont Association for the Blind, Adult Services Supervisor and instructor at UMass Boston provided the instruction. He designed the training to address best practice to meet the learning needs of new staff and presented advanced material for more experienced staff. This training provides new staff with valuable information regarding environmental and workplace assessments for clients and how to identify needed accommodations and supports. Information is presented on the different types of visual diagnoses and how they impact individuals.

Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired hosts an annual technology fair for DBVI professionals and DBVI clients. This provides a hands-on opportunity to explore adaptive devices such as: electronic magnification, computer software, illuminated canes, talking glucose meters, kitchen aids, handheld magnification, telescopic devices, writing aids and large print items. Workshops on current technology and product demonstrations are also provided.

DBVI staff continue to participate in trainings on relevant assessments needed for persons with visual impairment. These trainings are presented by qualified vision professionals. Trainings address new and relevant assistive technology for people who are blind and visually impaired and job analysis used to determine the need for a technology assessment and training.

Ongoing consultation is available for staff to support understanding of adaptive technology and how it can enhance an individual's job performance. Coordination and communication with low vision optometrists to enhance visual function in an employment situation is ongoing.

Other trainings attended by staff since January 2019 also include: Defensive driving, Emergency Procedures for State Employees, Continuous Improvement, Diversity, Civility and Unconscious Bias, Communication Skills, Core Team Collaboration, JAWS and ZoomText certifications, State Rehab Council and DBVI open house Team presentations, Vermont Family Network Annual Conference - Stories of Hope and Resilience, How to tell your Story training, and Leadership Coaching.

## **5. Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs**

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

The Division for the Blind operates under the State of Vermont Agency of Human Services. The Agency of Human Services has clear policy regarding access to programs as needed to ensure meaningful access to persons with limited English proficiency. Information regarding policy can be accessed through the Agency of Human Services intranet Limited English Proficiency (LEP) page. This policy applies to all Agency Departments, offices and employees. It is the policy of the Agency of Human Services to provide language assistance as may be needed to ensure meaningful access to our programs. Each department and office provide assistance so that persons seeking services may communicate effectively with program providers and with agency and department staff. Departments ensure persons seeking services understand which services and benefits are available to them and how they may best access. The LEP information provides resources and links dealing with written, face-to-face and over the phone communication with individuals for whom English is not the primary language. DBVI is also able to use an agency contract for phone and written translation of almost any language in the world. DBVI makes use of Vermont Interpreter

Referral Service (VIRS), an online resource to obtain interpreters of ASL for those consumers who are deaf.

## **6. Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

(6) Coordination of Personnel Development Under the individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act Describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated state unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.

DBVI works in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Vermont Department of Labor. The development of the Unified State Plan ensures compliance with the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA). These steps ensure students with disabilities between the ages of 14-21 are receiving comprehensive and unduplicated services. DBVI is a partner on the Core Transition teams located in regions around the State of Vermont. DBVI counselors work closely with DVR Youth Transition Counselors, VABIR Youth Employment Specialists, Guidance counselors and Case managers to ensure that students on IEPs are receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services and participating in activities as required in WIOA.

DBVI works closely with the teachers of the Visually Impaired partially funded through the AOE and the School districts. Students receive adaptive equipment and training to be prepared for actively participating in job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness training, instruction in self-advocacy and planning for post-secondary education or training.

DBVI provides funding for student participation in the LEAP summer program (Learn Earn and Prosper) and LEAP retreats during the academic year. The LEAP program provides students with learning about self-advocacy, post-secondary opportunities, and work readiness skills along with participation in work-based learning. Students who are visually impaired and at risk can work with counselors through Vermont Jobs Program. Students and their families can receive advocacy and education through the Vermont Family Network. DBVI provides transition age students who are visually impaired with vocational counseling, trainings, worksite accommodations, work experiences, advocacy and support. The annual Core Transition event is created and coordinated in partnership with DBVI, DOL, DVR, and AOE. Professionals gain increased knowledge and awareness of current practice and techniques that provide desired results for transition students through ongoing training, team collaboration and development of new initiatives.

### **Section j. Statewide Assessment**

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(a)).



## **1. Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those:**

A. with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;

Summary Outline of CSNA Methods, Results, Gaps, and Implications for State Plan

The Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998, requires each state to conduct a statewide needs assessment every three years. The current triennial needs assessment is statewide and jointly conducted by The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The activities for the comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) were completed during calendar year 2017. The following summary of the CSNA is being used to develop many of our goals and strategies for PY 2019, 2020 and 2021.

### Introduction

The goals of this needs assessment are to determine the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals in Vermont who are blind or visually impaired.

### Methodology

Information gathering included the use of:

- Existing disability population statistics including the Cornell Study;
- Disability population estimates from available data including the American Foundation for the Blind;
- Population projections and economic forecasts from federal and state data; Department Of Labor projections by state;
- Existing DBVI data, studies and experience; 911 data, type of service, cost, whether people currently served by DBVI are representative of the racial and ethnic minority distribution of people with disabilities within the state; data provided by CRPs; Counselor input;
- State level statistics from other federal programs; WIA, IEP, 504, Social Security,
- State and local data and reports;
- Stakeholder input: Surveys, focus groups, SRC meetings, interviews, Statewide Town Meetings, Customer—Centered Culture Focus Groups, and public hearings.
- Meetings and surveys with the statewide network of Teacher of the Visually Impaired.
- Statewide Customer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment Survey conducted by Market Decisions—November/December 2017.
- Review of Journal of Visual Impairment articles by DBVI staff.

Participants included DBVI Staff, State Rehabilitation Council, Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) Staff, and individuals who are blind or visually impaired from around the state. Dissemination plans included group meetings and individual interviews.

### Results

#### **Current Population Survey**

**Prevalence Rate** (Disability at the Vermont Population Level): The percentage of a man and a woman, aged 18-64 who report a work limitation in Vermont from 1981 (8.9%) to 2014 (10.1%)

**Labor Market Activity Rate:** The percentage of a man and a woman, aged 18-64 with a work limitation in Vermont who worked more than 52 hours in the prior calendar year from 1981 (53%) to 2014 (24%).

**Employment Rate:** The percentage of a man and a woman, aged 18-64 with a work limitation employed in Vermont from 1981 (40.8%) to 2014 (17.6%).

\*VonSchrader, S., Lee, C. G. (2017). Disability Statistics from the Current Population Survey (CPS). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang Tan Institute (YTI). Retrieved from Cornell University Disability Statistics website: [www.disabilitystatistics.org](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org)  
[2016 Disability Status Report--Vermont](#)

American Community Survey

Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S. (2016). 2016 Disability Status Report: Vermont. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability (YTI).

[www.disabilitystatistics.org](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org)

### **Summary of Overall Vermont Data**

**Age--**In 2016, the prevalence of disability in VT was:

- 14.3 percent for persons of all age
- 6.2 percent for persons ages 5 to 15
- 8.6 percent for persons ages 16 to 20
- 12.0 percent for persons ages 21 to 64
- 23.4 percent for persons ages 65 to 74
- 48.3 percent for persons ages 75+

**Disability Type--**In 2016, the prevalence of the six disability types among persons of all ages in VT was:

- 2.3% reported a Visual Disability
- 4.4% reported a Hearing Disability
- 6.7% reported an Ambulatory Disability
- 5.5% reported a Cognitive Disability
- 2.9% reported a Self-Care Disability
- 6.0% reported an Independent Living Disability

**Gender--**In 2016, 13.9 percent of females of all ages and 14.7 percent of males of all ages in VT reported a disability.

**Hispanic/Latino--**In 2016, the prevalence of disability among persons of all ages of Hispanic or Latino origin in VT was 7.9 percent.

**Race--**In VT in 2016, the prevalence of disability for working-age people (ages 21 to 64) was:

- 11.9 percent among Whites
- 9.7 percent among Black / African Americans
- 46.7 percent among Native Americans
- 14.1 percent among persons of some other race(s)

### **Populations in Households in Vermont**

Content provided by the US Census bureau for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

<https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-vermont>

- Ages 15 to 17=12,648
- Ages 18 to 19=6,392

- Ages 20=3,244
- Ages 21=3,615
- Ages 22 to 24=11,034

### **Number of Individuals who are minorities**

Content provided by the US Census bureau for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

<https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-vermont>

- Total population of Vermont= 625,741
- White- 596,292
- Two or More Races=10,753
- Hispanic or Latino=9,208
- Asian=7,947
- Black or African=6,277
- American Indian=2,207
- Another Race=2,105
- Three or More Races=610
- Native Hawaiian=160

### **Summary of Visual Disability data in Vermont—American Community Survey**

Is this person blind or does he/she have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?

#### **Working Age Adults**

DBVI estimates that there are approximately 7,100 Vermonters of working age (21-64) who are blind or severely visually impaired (meaning even with correction they are not able to easily read the newspaper). DBVI provides RSA defined services to approximately 5.3% of these individuals annually (293 in FFY17).

- Visual Disability Total= 14,100 (2.1% of 619,100 VT population)
- Ages 5 to 15= 100 (6.4% of 75,800)
- Age 16 to 20= 80 ( )
- Age 21 to 64= 7,100 (2% of 357,300)
- Age 65 to 74= 2,500 (3.6% of 68,500)
- Age 75 and Older= 3,400 (7.9% of 42,800)

#### Employment Rate

Employment rates of non-institutionalized

Working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities in Vermont.

- In 2016, the employment rate of working-age people with disabilities in VT was 41.4 percent.
- In 2016, the employment rate of working-age people without disabilities in VT was 85.0 percent.
- The gap between the employment rates of working-age people with and without disabilities was 43.6 percentage points.

#### **Gap--Employment Rate--Visual Disability**

- The gap between the employment rates of working-age people with a visual disability (48.2%) and without disabilities (85%) was (36.8%) percentage points.
- This represents about 3,400 out of 7,100 working-age people with a visual disability who are employed.

### **Not Working but Actively Looking for Work**

The percentage of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities in Vermont who are Not working but actively looking for work.

- In 2016 in VT, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities who were not working but actively looking for work was 5.5 percent.
- In 2016 in VT, the percentage of working-age people without disabilities who were not working but actively looking for work was 15.5 percent.
- The difference in the percentage of not working but actively looking for work between working-age people with and without disabilities was 10 percentage points.

#### **Gap--Not Working but Actively Looking for Work--Visual Disability**

- The difference in the percentage of not working but actively looking for work between working-age people with a visual disability (0.8%) and without disabilities (15.5%) was 15.42 percentage points.
- This represents about 296 people with a visual disability out of the 3,700 people with a visual disability who are working age not working but looking for work.

### **Working Full-Time/Full-Year**

This section presents the percentage of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities working full-time/full-year in Vermont.

- In 2016, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities working full-time/full-year in VT was 27.0 percent.
- In 2016, the percentage of working-age people without disabilities working full-time/full-year in VT was 62.6 percent.
- The difference in the percentage working full-time/full-year between working-age people with and without disabilities was 35.6 percentage points.

#### **Working Full-Time/Full-Year: Gap--Visual Disability**

- The difference in the percentage working full-time/full-year between working-age people with a visual disability (24.8%) and without disabilities (62.6%) was 37.8 percentage points.
- This represents about 1,700 out of 7,100 people with a visual disability who are working Full-Time/Full-Year.

### **Annual Earnings**

The median annual earnings of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities who work full-time/full-year in Vermont.

- In 2016, the median earnings of working-age people with disabilities who worked full-time/full-year in VT was \$44,300.
- In 2016, the median earnings of working-age people without disabilities who worked full-time/full-year in VT was \$44,500.
- The difference in the median earnings between working-age people with and without disabilities who worked full-time/full-year was \$200.

#### **Gap--Annual Earning--Visual Disability**

- The difference in the median earnings between working-age people with a visual disability earned \$50,400 and people without a disability earned \$44,500 showing that people with a visual disability earned \$5,900 more annually than people without a disability.

\*Caution: Estimates bases on a very small sample size (less than 40 individuals).

### **Poverty**

The poverty rates of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities in Vermont.

- In 2016, the poverty rate of working-age people with disabilities in VT was 21.2 percent.
- In 2016, the poverty rate of working-age people without disabilities in VT was 8.6 percent.
- The difference in the poverty rate between working-age people with and without disabilities was 12.6 percentage points.
- **Gap—Poverty—Visual Disability**
- The difference in the poverty rate between working-age people with a visual disability (27.9%) and without disabilities (8.6%) was 19.3 percentage points
- This represents about 2,000 people with a visual disability out of the 7,100 people with a visual disability who are working age that live in poverty.

### **Education Level**

- Less than High School=800 (11.9% of 7,100)
- A HS diploma or equivalent=3,600 (50.4% of 7,100)
- Some college/associates degree=1,500 (21.1% of 7,100)

College Bachelor Degree=1,200 (16.5% of 7,100)

### **Gap—Education Level--Visual Disability**

A majority of individuals with a visual disability do not get a college degree.

Information about DBVI agency resources:

DBVI currently has a total of 10 staff including four Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and two Associate Counselors. DBVI collaborates with CRPs including The Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired and The Vermont Association for Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation; and Supported Employment programs (i.e. Developmental Services Agencies and Mental Health programs).

The type, percentage, and cost of services provided by CRPs to individuals who are blind or visually impaired and who are minorities.

- DBVI contracts with the Vermont Association for Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation to provide job development services for DBVI customers in all four regions of the state (\$60,000 annually).
- DBVI customers have access to supported employment services through an agreement with the General VR agency to access those programs as needed. In 2017, 8 DBVI customers participated in supported employment programs.
- DBVI contracts with the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired for Low Vision, Rehabilitation Teaching, and Orientation and Mobility services (\$175,000 annually).

Customer Satisfaction Data—Key Findings and Discussion

### **Statewide Survey**

The survey instrument for this research was developed jointly between the Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Market Decisions Research. It is based on question topics that Market Decisions Research has used in conducting satisfaction research among Vocational Rehabilitation consumers in six states. The goal of this research was to provide an accurate assessment of the views of consumers that could be used to assess satisfaction with services with VT DBVI overall. The target population for this research consisted of all consumers with open and closed cases.

## Goals:

- The Customer Quality Assurance Survey and Needs Assessment is designed to allow customers to provide feedback about the services they have received.
- The survey provides a tool to measure satisfaction with the agency and the services provided.
- The survey is designed to gather information to allow quality improvements.
- This administration allows comparisons to the 2003, 2011, and 2015 research and the opportunity to see trends in customer satisfaction.

## Executive Summary

### **Consumer Core Metrics:**

- Overall Satisfaction and Expectations: 82
- Experience with Services Provided by DBVI: 83
- Experience with DBVI Staff and Counselors: 93
- Communications with DBVI Staff: 88
- Consumer Control and Involvement: 86
- Outcomes and Meeting Goals: 85
- Ease of the Application Process for DBVI Services: 88
- Accessibility of the DBVI Office: 87
- Satisfaction with Current Employment: 85
- Recommend VT DBVI: 98
- Experience Problems with VT DBVI: 89

### **New Skills and Knowledge**

- The most commonly received service from VT DBVI was adaptive equipment (67%). This was also the service consumers most frequently found most helpful (45%)
- The most well-known services offered in other places that consumers thought VT DBVI needs is additional training opportunities.
- 92% of consumers are satisfied with the choice of services available.
- 85% of consumers think DBVI delivers services to them well.
- 89% of consumers are satisfied with the choice of service providers.
- 90% of consumers are satisfied with their choice of a vocational goal.
- 88% of consumers are satisfied with the information they have been given about the choices they have.

### **Attitudes and Opinions**

- 92% of consumers are satisfied with VT DBVI's program overall.
- 94% of consumers are satisfied with their involvement in their DBVI experience.
- 11% of consumers experienced some problem with DBVI or the services provided to them.
- The problems most commonly being experienced are not receiving employment (37%) and not receiving help in reaching plan or goals (29%).
- Among those experiencing problems with DBVI or the services provided, 59% indicate that DBVI worked to resolve those problems.
- The most common sources of improvement offered by consumers is more training (14%) and increases in staff (8%).
- The most commonly sought need to address is for more transportation and drivers for all of consumers' needs.

- Consumers are most likely to place the blame for unmet needs on funding issues (28%).
- Most DBVI consumers believe that the unmet needs could be solved by providing more staff (23%) or better information being made publicly available (21%).

### **New Behaviors and Circumstances**

- 81% of consumers agree that the DBVI services they received helped or will help them become more financially independent.
- 88% of consumers feel that the DBVI services they received helped them or will help them become more independent, in general.
- 84% of consumers feel the DBVI staff helped or will help them reach their job goal.
- The new skills consumers are most likely to report are computer and technology use skills (23%).
- The most commonly reported assistive technology skills learned are computer/technology skills (22%).
- 54% of consumers are working full or part time.
- The service that working DBVI consumers are most likely to believe helped them get or keep their job was job coaching and support (28%).
- Asked what worked best in helping them prepare for their job, consumers are most likely to say adaptive equipment and counseling.
- 91% of working consumers are satisfied with their current job.
- Jobs in education are most in demand among DBVI consumers not currently employed (15%).
- Among those not working, help in finding a job (3%) is the most commonly reported service consumers need and where not receiving.

### **Treatment by VT DBVI**

- 94% of consumers feel the staff of DBVI helped or is helping them achieve their DBVI goal.
- Almost all (91%) consumers report that the DBVI office is accessible for someone with their type of disability.
- Nearly all consumers (95%) feel the DBVI staff treats them with dignity and respect.

### **Actions Meeting Standards**

- 83% of consumers got the results they wanted from DBVI.
- 92% of consumers felt that the services provided by VT DBVI met their expectations.
- 90% of consumers felt that the services they received from VT DBVI compared well to their ideal program.
- 98% of consumers would tell their friends with disabilities to go to the DBVI program for help.
- 93% of consumers agree that they are better off as a result of the services received from DBVI.

### **Timeliness of Action**

- 92% of consumers are satisfied with how long it took their counselor to answer questions and address concerns.
- 95% of consumers indicate that it is easy to contact their DBVI counselor.
- 91% of consumers feel that services are provided as promptly as necessary.

### **Other Items**

- 96% of consumers found it easy to complete an application for DBVI services.

- **64% of consumers have been informed they could address problems with Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and that they could address it with the Client Assistance Program.**

## **Key Findings**

### **Summary**

The overall conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that a large majority of consumers are satisfied with the Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), satisfied with the services they receive, and only a small fraction have experienced any problems. This reaffirms the findings from prior studies conducted between 2003 and 2015.

The staff of DBVI is viewed as helpful and interested in meeting the needs of their consumers. Staff effectively communicates with their consumers and staff also engage with their consumers during the process. Staff listen to consumers when determining goals and the large majority of consumers indicate that DBVI provided the necessary assistance to help them achieve their goals.

Based upon the views and attitudes of the large majority of consumers, the survey results did not identify any major problems with the Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired or the services it provides.

Looking at the positive highlights, the vast majority of consumers are positive about:

- Their overall experience
- Believe that DBVI met their expectations
- Have a positive experience with the services provided by DBVI
- Have a positive experience with DBVI staff and counselors
- Feel they are part of the process in setting goals
- Have positive outcomes, and
- Nearly universally recommend DBVI to others.

While positive, the survey results do show a slight drop from the 2015 survey. The declines observed are small but occurred across nearly all metrics. This suggests there are factors having a slight negative impact consumer experience. In reviewing consumer feedback, the most commonly mentioned issues or concerns are in the areas of:

- Issues communicating with staff or counselors, difficulty reaching staff or counselors
- Difficulties with paperwork and forms, needing help in completing forms, needing alternate formats
- Difficulties in finding employment, few job options
- Waiting to receive services, have not received services
- Needing more support or services, having to fight to obtain services, needing more guidance

### **Pre—Employment Transition Skills Planning**

Includes:

- Statewide Survey of all Teacher of the Visually Impaired
- Statewide survey sent to all students and families.
- Data-Mapping of Child Count data.
- Mailing to all special education and 504 administrators
- Calculation of current Pre-ETS Expenditures and Forecasting of future needs.



Statewide Survey of all Teachers of the Visually Impaired in Vermont--Survey open from November 2017 through December 2017.

What needs do your students have in job exploration counseling?

Most Popular Responses:

- Exposure to jobs in their community
- Receiving hands on experience as to how jobs are performed
- Meeting other employed adults with similar impairments

Key Answers:

- "Knowledge of actual jobs, the opportunity to "see" (hands on) how jobs are performed, the opportunity to understand how assistive tech and strategies can allow them to do jobs successfully. Meeting other adults with visual impairments who are working is also helpful"

In your experience, what skills do students need to be prepared for work experiences?

Most Common Responses:

- Social Skills (How to ask questions, making friends, etiquette, grooming etc.)
- Personal Communication skills
- Time management
- Technology
- Lots of range of answers

Key Answers:

- "Time job shadowing with HANDS on experience... Social skills, constructive criticism, making friends, etiquette, grooming, problem solving (not waiting for others to step in), assertiveness, transportation options, assistive technology, handling downtime appropriately, annual resume writing and updates. Understanding and identifying the list of job skills needed WITHIN each job."

How are your students' strengths and weaknesses currently assessed in the area of work-based learning?

Most Common Responses:

- Skill Inventory Checklist/ Job Readiness Checklist
- Observation/Evaluation of students by teacher and employer

Key Answers:

- "We were just given a readiness list, but other list are also out there in the areas of independent living, social skills, technology, etc. APH has a book on assessment and goals toward transitioning students successfully as well. I currently have students in middle school and under, and I have not been using a formal list with my current students. I definitely need to be thinking more about this with my middle schoolers though it really starts in the younger years with exposure and experiences."

What would help your students learn more about post-secondary options? Is there anything DBVI could do in order to help?

Most Common Responses:

- Have students meet with TVI and DBVI staff to discuss options
- Have DBVI organize college visits and gatherings with current college students
- Connect with families
- Put together overnight experiences like LEAP, but held more often and for high school students only

Key Answers:

- “What would be helpful is if DBVI put together a series of overnight experiences - like the leap retreat weekends but even quicker, and more often for students in 10-12 grade. Small but frequent experiences where our students could get together more frequently while being exposed to work experiences - like an overnight where all the 10-12 graders then go and do different job shadows, and then get together in 8 weeks and switch job shadows, and learn the routes, be exposed to different access tools, spend time socializing, and then using social skills at the job sites. Some jobs could be a professor at UVM, various food service employees, computer programmers, staff at echo museum, financial industry, social work organization, etc..”

What skills do your students need to be prepared for post-secondary education?

Most Common Responses:

- Organization
- Daily living skills
- Technology
- Advocacy Skills

Key Answers:

- “The same ones as regular students plus advocacy, exposure to applications and how to find resources on line to assist them. The opportunity to practice some problem solving situations ahead of time.”

What do your students need to get ready for employment?

Most Common Responses:

- Advocacy Opportunities
- Social skills
- Professional skills (Interviewing, dressing for work, office skills etc.)
- Confidence

Key Answers:

- “Opportunities to perform jobs. Training around how to go about getting the training necessary to obtain a paying job in the community, communication skills training, conversational skills training, personal care skills training, etc.”

What job readiness skills do you think your students need to succeed in the workplace?

Most Common Responses:

- Often, people referred back to their answers from previous question

Do your students receive the help needed to advocate for themselves? Why or why not?

Most Common Responses:

- Most respondents indicated that their students receive some advocacy training or are made aware of some program available. The issue is having the students take advantage of said programs or continuing their training through high school.

Key Answers:

- “Yes they need help to advocate for themselves. "Self Determination" is one of the 9 Expanded Core Curriculum bullets. It takes a village, Most students come from overprotective and/or dysfunctional families so they depend on the school staff and outside sources to help guide them.”

Is there anything you would like to see DBVI do with self-advocacy services?

Most Common Responses:

- Educating Parents, form a parents group
- Work with students and parents directly
- Create a progress checklist
- Run workshops

What services have been successful for your students? Why?

Most Common Responses:

- Camps, get togethers
- CCS, Howard, LEAP, HAPI
- Job placement services
- Work experiences and assistive technology consultations.

Key Answers:

- “The arrangement of work experiences, and assistive technology consultations have been beneficial for several of my students. Direct engagement with students outside of the school setting has also been instrumental in moving students forward with their transition planning.”

Where are there gaps in services?

Most Common Responses:

- Inconsistent coverage of job coaches for students
- Opportunities to get together across the school year
- Persistence of being in contact with school based personnel
- Not many outlets for real job experience
- Funding for personal transportation
- Time, not enough time to do everything
- Assistive Technology
- Daily living skill services

Key Answers:

- “Time. We need to actually identify transition specific objectives in the IEPs or more transition specific objectives per school year. 24 hours is a day is not long enough. Students with a VI need an extra 13th year of schooling in most of the 9 Expanded Core Curriculum areas”
- “Based on conversations I have had with parents the most challenging thing seems to be the inconsistent coverage of job coaches for students who need extra support in the community or at work”
- “There are certainly no obvious caps and services. However, funding for personal transportation expenses and access to efficient transportation remains a challenge in our largely rural community.”
- “I think DLS instruction beyond what a TVI is able to do could start even earlier.”

### **Statewide Survey of Families**

In fall 2017 DBVI sent a survey to all visually impaired students and families in high school. The questions included their needs for the 5-core Pre-ETS activities. These results helped DBVI with outreach to all individuals including those who are underrepresented or minorities. The survey also included a letter that explains DBVI intent to assist students with career planning and finding work experiences. It also described the summer work experience LEAP program and school year retreats and workshops.

## Statewide Focus Group Meeting (Included DBVI consumers and several SRC Members).

In January 2018 DBVI held a statewide focus group as part of the CSNA. The focus group included representation from all regions of the state. The event had two main objectives. First, to ask participants “What is working well and what else is needed to help people who are blind or visually impaired teach their employment and independence goals?” The other goal was to have an in-depth opportunity for each participant to share with the group the IOS apps that are most useful for their employment and independence.

### **DBVI Questions and Notes**

As you think about employment, what can you think of that DBVI can do to help with that?

- Tech training
  - The ability to spend more time with individuals to do something consistent over a period of time and be proficient with certain skills
  - People get their feet wet, but they don't really remember when they are seeking employment
  - There is room for more training
  - As technology gets better, people need to become more informed
  - Quarterly Newsletter
  - This has been updated
  - This is what's new
  - Tech Listserv (E-mail and contribute to constantly and peer to peer)
  - Podcasting
  - VPR has been teaching people about podcasts
  - DBVI needs to find a way to have the trainers become more adept at being innovative within a person's domain for possible low-tech solutions.
  - Using the things around them to solve a problem
  - Don't constantly throw technology at something
  - Try to make things easier to use without always have to pull up an app
  - Have DBVI find some training or encouragement for instructors to learn more ways in helping people find their own solutions
  - Increase tactile knowledge and stuff like that
  - Adapting to what you have
  - Perkins School Program to Learn More Adaptive Knowledge
  - How do we share low tech solutions?
  - Listserv Idea
  - Peer to Peer Connecting
  - It's hard for people to find a way to get where they need to be
  - “There's a canyon between me and a job”
  - I want to meet people who can help me
  - What DBVI can do about outreach?
  - Need to advertise more
  - Department of Human Resources
- How can DBVI reach underserved populations?

## Issues

- Transportation
- No actual job to go to necessarily
- WIOA could change this
- Radio PSAs
- Podcast
- VABVI (Video Clips "How I Do It")
- Contact the legislator for more BEP sites.
- Get more BEP training sites in the state.
- More connection with Department of Labor contacts
- A launching place for subcommittees and meetings
- Getting connected with other entities and organizations

## **Pre-Employment Survey of Students who participated in the Summer 2017 LEAP Work Experience Program**

What do you think will help you the most with reaching your employment goals?

- More experience in the field that I want and great organization skills.
- Work experience, positive attitude.
- Learning how to make and build a better resume than what I already have.
- I think working closely with my DBVI counselor and being as open and honest as possible with employers in regards to my disability and possible limitations.
- I think going to college would help me reach my employment goals, so I can figure out exactly what my employment goals are.
- Learning more about Assistive Technology.
- Professional development Friday's really helped me with interview skills and how to format my resume.
- I think more individualized training, particularly in technology (working with JAWS).
- Having a reliable list of references so that they can give a good recommendation for jobs that I may be applying to in the future.
- Being more responsible, and getting the accommodations I will need will help me be successful.
- Finding better ways to access accommodations in the work place - both in tools to use and ways to advocate.
- Making good contacts/networking. I was able to meet someone (Heather B) who may be able to help me get into the job field that I want to go into. I want to learn from people like her.
- Researching and making sure I have the necessary skills needed for the certain job. Different accommodations and making sure I'm aware of the different services I receive.
- I think practicing interviews and learning about interviews will help me in the future.
- What are your needs in relation to your employment goals?
- Better public speaking skills, better organization skills, and learning about other music.
- Leadership skills. Working skills.
- I need to work on not influencing people around me and I need to become a better role model.

- My needs really depend on the job and expectations of me in that particular position. I need to be allowed to use all assistive technology in the workplace and often require extra time and patience in order to complete certain tasks, particularly if it involves a lot of reading or computer work.
- I need to learn how to budget my money well. I also need help on my time management skills.
- Getting more comfortable with using Assistive Technology (I.e. Voiceover on Mac).
- I need support and good accommodations from the future employer.
- I think I am lacking in technology training, or the fact that I haven't stepped completely out of my comfort zone yet, in terms of being more independent and proactive.
- I might need extra time to learn what to do at a new job, in order to perform well.
- I'll need a job coach for a little bit.
- I need to live in an area where there are more entry-level positions for people under 18.
- I will need some adaptive equipment to get into the medical field. I will also need to learn computer program to help me succeed.
- Making accommodations and making sure the employer know that I have different needs compared to sighted person. I will need to use my phone in order to read certain things, such as labels and or different documents.
- My needs are accessible technology and for my employers to know my different needs. I will also need more training on how to take public transportation.
- What do you feel is getting in the way of reaching your employment goals?
- More practice with public speaking.
- I feel as though I'm the only one standing in the way of my goals, but that can be sad for all life. I can be a difficult person to change and I need to learn the changes the best thing in some cases.
- Outside of LEAP, I have not been employed. I think my biggest obstacle currently is my lack of experience in the workforce, very evident on my short resume.
- I think a couple things are procrastination and not having enough motivation are two of them.
- My vision is a barrier because of other peoples' perceptions and how they decide to interpret my abilities.
- Trying to explain my disability to some employers because I think a lot of employers may think of us as a liability.
- Not having a college education, and not knowing how to get a job on my own because I need assistance for that.
- Age is getting in the way of getting a job (they say I must be 18 or older) and also disability discrimination in general.
- People opinions of the blind community is getting in the way. I hear a lot "you can't do that" or "no one wants a blind nurse." I feel that people with visual impairments are thought of as less capable.
- I can't think of anything that's getting in the way because I haven't applied to any jobs, and I'm still in high school. Transportation is the only thing I can think of as being an issue but that's not anything I can't work around.

- My learning disability and the fact that I take longer to grasp information gets in the way of me reaching my employment goals.

### **Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness JVIB Articles**

The highlights of previously cited in CSNA articles are cited here because they are still relevant. Please refer to the previous CSNA for a more complete summary. Several JVIB article are new and include more complete summaries below.

The previous CSNA (FFY 15) referenced several Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness (JVIB) article that have identified several “Needs” of people who are blind or visually impaired related to students and employment. Here are some of the main highlights:

#### **Transportation:**

- The most frequently cited barriers for visually impaired individuals regarding transportation are: the availability of public transportation, travel time, cost, safety issues, and stress associated with transportation.
- Engage clients in problem-solving discussions to generate transportation options; sharing of client success stories and innovative strategies implemented to overcome transportation barriers.
- In an effort to continue to support consumers around transportation issues DBVI could survey consumers to obtain information on effective transportation solutions and share with other consumers. Showcase success stories on creative transportation solutions.
- Participating in efforts to improve the overall transportation system.
- Providing consumer’s transportation expenses for at least 60 days after the Customers are employed.
- Encouraging customers to relocate (when needed) and network with co-workers and community agencies to hire drivers.
- Encouraging customers to car pool, meet somebody, post messages on bulletin boards, run an ad in the newspaper and try to find somebody in community.

#### **Employer Attitudes/Educating the Public:**

- Disability awareness training and assistive technology were two of the top five strategies identified by employers that would be helpful in hiring persons with disabilities.
- There are multiple theories about how attitudes are formed and changed, and many of them propose a link between knowledge and attitudes.
- What level of knowledge do employers have about how someone who is blind or visually impaired can perform specific job functions (that is, knowledge about job accommodations or available assistive technology)?
- Do employers know where to seek help with accommodating someone who is blind or visually impaired?
- In an employer survey a majority of managers mistakenly believed there were few jobs in their organizations that visually impaired people could successfully perform. They also thought it was more expensive to hire someone with impaired vision compared to someone without a disability. The majority of managers made it a lower priority to recruit, train, and retain employees with disabilities than to recruit, train, and retain executives, senior managers, young employees, and minorities.

- Involving the employer in advocating for the creation, modification, or expansion of transportation programs. Systems change when employers also advocate for more transportation options.
- Providing education to employers and human resources professionals about job accommodations, including where to find additional information, is necessary and would be an appropriate strategy to use when interacting with employers.
- Encouraging job seekers to volunteer information about how they perform specific activities and their transportation options. Answering the unasked question is important because what the employer is imagining probably is not accurate.
- Educating employers about visual impairment and how it affects functioning.
- Creating opportunities for increased contact between employers and persons who are visually impaired.
- Sharing testimonials and newspaper articles of success stories.
- Doing presentations each month to describe the whole process and the benefits of hiring a blind person.
- Offering training about the Americans with Disabilities Act to employers.
- Providing community education days.
- Facilitating educational activities particularly targeted for October because it is National Disability Awareness Month.
- Taking tours and publicly recognizing businesses that employ visually impaired persons.
- Facilitating employer mentoring programs and breakfast meetings.
- Developing long-term relationships with employers, particularly those with large businesses.
- Sharing success stories about competent blind people on the job and publicize them in many ways. Include consumer organizations in these efforts.

### **Soft Skills/Interviewing Skills**

- Making sure everyone has practice interviews so the person is ready.
- Making sure DBVI customers are competent in discussing their skills, qualifications, and visual impairment with employers.

### **Assistive Technology**

- Access to assistive technology
- Providing high-quality training in adaptive skills and assistive technology are vital aspects of preparation for employment.

### **Progressive Employment**

- The need for a transitional period to full-time employment during which they engage in progressive employment including volunteer work, part-time work, work experiences, or on-the-job training.
- Providing on-the-job training programs and job coaches to promote positive integration into the workplace.
- Finding ways to keep valued older employees.

### **Benefits Counseling/Guidance**

- Fear of losing benefits.

### **Peer Support/Job Clubs**

- Creating job clubs for promoting appropriate work behavior and increasing knowledge about employment options.



- Promoting peer support as a powerful force in assisting DBVI customers through the training and employment process.

### **Adjustment to Blindness**

- Individual adjustment to blindness

### **Additional recent JVIB articles relating to “Needs” of Blind or Visually Impaired related to Employment include:**

**Cmar, J. L. (2015). Orientation and Mobility Skills and Outcome Expectations as Predictors of Employment for Young Adults with Visual Impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 109(2), 95-106.**

- Cmar analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study to assess the relationship between orientation and mobility, post-secondary education, and employment for persons who are blind and visually impaired. The study revealed that, “...youths with high ratings on community travel skills were significantly more likely to be employed up to six years post- high school,” (p. 102). The author concluded that their results, “...suggest that independently traveling to places outside the home, using public transportation, and arranging airplane or train trips are predictive of later employment for adolescents with visual impairments. These experiences can be facilitated through avenues such as off-campus O&M [Orientation and Mobility] instruction, transition programs, and summer programs, and can be further supported by family involvement,” (p. 103).

**Crudden, A. (2015). Transportation issues: perspectives of orientation and mobility providers. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (Online)*, 109(6), 457-468.**

- Crudden conducted an exploratory study of orientation and mobility providers’ perceptions of transportation issues facing blind and visually impaired individuals. The author found that transportation is a major barrier for people who are blind and visually impaired, especially in terms of employment. “Participants unanimously agreed that transportation has a significant negative impact on the employment of persons who are visually impaired,” (p. 461).

**Crudden, A., Antonelli, K., & O’Mally, J. (2017). A Customized Transportation Intervention for Persons with Visual Impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 111(4), 341-353.**

- Crudden et al. evaluated a customized transportation intervention program for people who are blind or visually impaired. The study consisted of a pretest and posttest of participants’ social problem-solving skills, transportation self-efficacy, and transportation knowledge. Participants were measured against a comparison group of blind and visually impaired persons not undergoing the intervention. The authors found that, “The intervention group scored higher than the comparison group on all measures at posttest, and trends in all cases showed that the intervention group improved more from pretest to posttest than the comparison group,” (p. 350) and concluded that, “These results lend support to the necessity and benefit of engaging consumers in structured transportation planning discussions and activities,” (p. 351).

**Crudden, A., McDonnall, M. C., & Hierholzer, A. (2015). Transportation: an electronic survey of persons who are blind or have low vision. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (Online)*, 109(6), 445.**

- Crudden et al. conducted a nationwide survey of blind and visually impaired persons around issues related to transportation. Survey respondents did not identify transportation as a primary barrier to employment. However, the authors note: "... just over half of the persons who described themselves as self-employed, unemployed, retired, students, or volunteers reported that lack of transportation limited their participation in employment. More than one third of participants reported having turned down jobs because of transportation concerns," (p. 452). The authors concluded that while transportation remains a major barrier to employment for blind and visually impaired persons, the concern within that community is with the obstacles transportation creates for leisure, daily living, and community engagement.

**Ehn, M., Möller, K., Danermark, B., & Möller, C. (2016). The Relationship Between Work and Health in Persons with Usher Syndrome Type 2. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (Online), 110(4), 233-244.**

- Ehn et al. investigated work and health in people with dual sensory loss through Usher syndrome. Results showed that individuals with Ushers syndrome who were employed enjoyed significantly better health than those who were in receipt of disability assistance funds. The authors concluded that, "...there is a need for early interventions supporting persons with USH2 [Ushers syndrome] by means of vocational training and other work-promoting activities instead of granting them a disability pension, since in the long term employment may make the difference between good and bad psychological health," (p. 242).

**Hierholzer, A. C., & Bybee, J. (2017). Working with Randolph-Sheppard Entrepreneurs Who Are Deafblind: A Qualitative Analysis. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 111(1), 61-71.**

- Hierholzer and Bybee examined challenges to deafblind entrepreneurs and staff involved with the Randolph-Sheppard Enterprise Program. The authors conducted interviews with staff and deafblind entrepreneurs. Their findings suggest that the largest challenge to deafblind entrepreneurs was communication with customers. The authors conclude that, "Although communication is a challenge, neither deafblind entrepreneurs nor BEP [Business Enterprise Program] staff view communication challenges as insurmountable barriers. Individuals with deafblindness can succeed as BEP entrepreneurs if they are provided with updated technology, notify customers about the best ways to communicate with them, and keep a positive, upbeat attitude when interacting with customers," (p. 70).

**Högner, N. (2015). Psychological stress in people with dual sensory impairment through Usher syndrome type II. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (Online), 109(3), 185-197.**

- Högner evaluated questionnaire responses to investigate psychological stress in people with dual sensory loss through Usher syndrome. Their findings indicated that respondents had high levels of stress and identified orientation and mobility, chronic worry, and social isolation as the leading factors in the development of stress. Högner concluded that, "...it is important to offer services to people with USH [Usher syndrome] that enable them to participate in society," (p. 195). Further, the author highlighted the importance of employment rehabilitation for people with Usher syndrome.

**McDonnall, M. C., Crudden, A., LeJeune, B. J., Steverson, A., & O'Donnell, N. (2016). Needs and Challenges of Seniors with Combined Hearing and Vision Loss. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 110(6), 399-411.**

- McDonnall et al. surveyed seniors with combined hearing and vision loss to identify needs and challenges. The survey demonstrated that transportation, technology training, assistance with errands, and improved communications were the top reported needs for seniors with dual sensory loss. Needs for early onset of one or both sensory losses focused on transportation and use of technology. The authors emphasized the importance of technology training for seniors with dual sensory loss as it can, "...contribute to overall improved quality of life, since it has the potential to improve communication options and reduce feelings of isolation," (p. 399).

**O'Mally, J., & Antonelli, K. (2016). The Effect of Career Mentoring on Employment Outcomes for College Students Who Are Legally Blind. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 110(5), 295-307.**

- O'Mally and Antonelli conducted a nationwide longitudinal study to evaluate career mentoring outcomes for blind college students. Their findings demonstrated that, "Students working with mentors were significantly more assertive in job hunting and showed trends in improvement for job-seeking self-efficacy and career adaptability. Despite these positive trends, however, the mentoring relationship did not have a significant influence on employment rates and job satisfaction," (p. 303). The authors conclude, "Our results indicate that mentor relationships are effective in improving jobseeking assertiveness for legally blind college students. Trends indicated that improvement may also occur in areas of self-efficacy and career adaptability and, perhaps with a longer mentoring period, significant gains would be seen in these areas as well," (p. 304).

**O'Mally, J., & Steverson, A. (2017). Reflections on Developing an Employment Mentoring Program for College Students Who Are Blind. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (Online)*, 111(3), 271-276.**

- O'Mally and Steverson (2017) reported on an employment mentoring program for blind college students. The program involved matching mentors and mentees to facilitate job shadowing, networking, job-seeking skills, and finding transportation. The authors found that this type of program, "...demonstrates the desire among students with visual impairments and professionals to work with others in pursuing employment," (p. 275). O'Mally and Steverson conclude that future mentoring programs might benefit from, "...broadening eligibility to include college students of nontraditional ages and those who are in the earlier stages of post-secondary education," (p. 275). Further, the authors highlight the need for service providers to encourage students to pursue these types of opportunities and emphasize the development of, "...realistic views of securing employment," (p. 275).

Victor, C. M., Thacker, L. R., Gary, K. W., Pawluk, D. T. V., & Copolillo, A. (2017).

**Workplace Discrimination and Visual Impairment: A Comparison of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Charges and Resolutions Under the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 111(5), 475-482.**

- Victor et al. analyzed workplace discrimination cases concerning persons who are blind or visually impaired. Several trends were identified in these cases, including: a

decrease in job acquisition charges, an increase in job satisfaction charges, and an increase in job retention charges. The authors note: "Workplace discrimination experiences were most prevalent with aspects regarding job satisfaction, which includes issues with reasonable accommodations," (p. 480). The authors highlight the need for vocational rehabilitations service providers, "...to be aware of and knowledgeable about assistive technology, adaptive communication, and independent living devices that could supplement or enhance the capabilities of individuals to perform essential job functions needed for successful employment," (p. 480). Further, the authors urge vocational rehabilitation providers to be knowledgeable of federal and state laws governing workplace discrimination and to provide one-on-one support to blind and visually impaired professionals throughout the employment process.

Nearly all DBVI consumers are considered to have a most significant disability. The CSNA included many of these individuals in focus groups, interviews, and customer satisfaction surveys to determine their employment needs. The findings from all of these assessment methods plus a review of the JVIB research show some major categories of need. They include needs for training and work experiences that lead to good jobs, adaptive skills training, and assistive technology computer training. There is also a significant need to educate employers about the abilities of people who are blind. DBVI has strong partnerships for individuals who need supported employment. Eligible consumers can access programs through the Developmental Services Agencies. DBVI strives to have all individuals participate in trial work experiences using supported employment when appropriate.

#### B. who are minorities;

The CSNA assessment data show the Vermont demographics. It shows that people are spread throughout our rural state and are not necessarily living in certain communities. The exception is Burlington which has the most diverse population in Vermont. These data guide our outreach efforts and indicate a need for DBVI to outreach to all communities. The most challenging region for outreach is the Northeast Kingdom which is very rural. The CSNA indicated a need to do more public outreach on the radio using a Public Service Announcement across the state.

The DBVI Director is also a member of the Agency of Humans Services Committee to make sure the agency is accessible to all individuals. Several initiatives of the group include sharing resources about translation services and connections with community agencies that assist diverse groups. Some specific needs and strategies include:

- Interpretation and Translation service available to all AHS staff.
- Tools for working with LEP clients
- Specialized training for communicating across cultures, and; communicating effectively through an interpreter.
- The key service needs for reaching out to individuals who are blind or visually impaired and who are minorities (Strategies for Reaching Out to Minority Individuals With Disabilities—By Fabricio E. Balcazar, Ph.D., Principal Investigator Developing the Capacity of Minority Communities to Promote the Implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)—University of Illinois at Chicago) are:
- Making sure your agency can provide the services they need.

- Utilizing a diverse research team or diverse staff to deliver services to the target population.
- Building personal relationships with members of the target community.
- Becoming a part of the local network.
- Building consumers' strengths.
- Being persistent and do not let consumers go when they fail to comply.
- Being willing to listen. If we want to reach out, we should be able and willing to listen.
- Utilizing members of the target community in outreach efforts.
- Meeting people where they are instead of waiting for them to come to you.
- Utilizing multiple channels of communication to disseminate information in the target community.

### C. who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

The CSNA data shows 3 categories of individuals who are unserved or underserved. Vermont is the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest average age population in the country. Many of these older individuals desire to stay in the workforce to meet their financial needs. Losing vision can be part of the aging process and this becomes a major adjustment and often causes feelings of loss and denial. DBVI is available help these individuals stay in the workforce as they learn new skills to adapt to their vision loss.

The data also shows that individuals who are deaf-blind have unique and specific needs due to their dual sensory impairment. Services like Support Service Providers are helpful to access the community and lesson isolation. There are very few professionals in the country who can teach adaptive blindness skills like Orientation and Mobility who can also communicate using tactile sign. There is a need to build more of that capacity in Vermont. The ICANNECT program is beginning to grow in New England and Perkins is providing important technology through that program. There is a need to build strong partnerships with the Helen Keller National Center who can provide specialized training for staff and services for deaf-blind individuals.

The greatest underserved population is in the Northeast Kingdom of the state. This is very rural and has very few jobs. DBVI encourages youth in this area of the state to participate in the LEAP summer residential work experience program and the residential school year retreats so they can participate in job readiness training and work experiences in an area where there are more work opportunities.

The AHS website resource includes:

<https://inside.vermont.gov/agency/AHSIntra/LEP/Pages/LEP.aspx>

- Interpretation and Translation service available to all AHS staff.
- Tools for working with LEP clients
- Specialized training for communicating across cultures, and; communicating effectively through an interpreter.
- DBVI data shows a need to increase the percentage of transition age students that receive services.

Suggestions in Assume Nothing!—A Monograph from the 38th Institute on Rehabilitation Issues to Address Underserved Populations, Including Individuals Who Are Deaf-Blind

Rehabilitation Services Administration U.S. Department of Education

- Cultural training for staff from consultants on DB culture and someone from Alliance of Africans Living in Vermont or Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program for ethnic minorities. DBVI need to truly understand the beliefs and values about work and “independence” and disability held by people from these cultures. (pages 23 & 28)
- Get a DB person or a person of color on the SRC (top of page 17)
- Lack of services for DB people. Someone in the state should provide DB leadership for services. (p 31)
- Initiate a DB targeted “town hall meeting” (p 33)
- Create a partnership with VR to assist individuals who are deaf-blind seeking employment.
- Assign specific staff to take the lead for underserved and underrepresented populations.
- Add cultural humility/ cultural competency training
- Consider outreach for All strategies in each region.

D. who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and

WIOA has been a great way to bring together all of the partners of the American Job Centers. Workgroups including all of the partners have met to determine the priorities and best ways to make the workforce programs available.

The workgroup has identified the following needs.

- Maximize access to the workforce development system through seamless coordination and communication among the different partners to provide a quality, consistent experience for all Vermonters.
- The workforce development system will prioritize pathways to livable wage employment for all Vermonters, with an increased focus on low income Vermonters.
- Strengthen the Vermont economy by increasing the number of Vermont women employed in the skilled trades, STEM fields, advanced manufacturing and other Vermont priority sectors.
- Ensure all students who graduate from high school are college ready, career ready, or both; increase the number of Vermonters who pursue and complete post-secondary education, training and career opportunities with the education and specific skills necessary to keep Vermonters competitive in the economic sectors critical to the Vermont economy.
- Align the workforce development system to the needs of employers, as well as job seekers, through systematic and ongoing engagement and partnership.

E. who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.

The research and feedback from students and families identify work experiences, work readiness, and assistive technology skills as most helpful for future employment success. When students have the opportunity for several work experiences during high school they learn what types of jobs they like and don't like. They also learn transferable skills they can use for future jobs. The challenge for Vermont students is that they have very limited opportunities for these work experiences in their small rural town. Ten years

ago, DBVI created a strategy to meet that need. It was necessary to create a summer residential experience for students from across the state to live in a larger community where there is a wide variety of work experience jobs available. The program has expanded and now includes weekend retreats during the school year. These retreats focus on self-advocacy and job readiness training. Most recently all LEAP activities are including some aspect of assistive technology that is built into the curriculum. Proficiency with technology is also a predictor of future employment success. DBVI counselors have identified the need for students to have better technology skills for the workplace. For that reason DBVI developed and assessment tool to evaluate technology skills. This information can then be used by schools and DBVI staff to create opportunities to improve these skills before college, vocational training, or employment. Students also learn important self-advocacy skills and independent living skills at the LEAP work experiences and job readiness retreats which are also strong predictors and essential for future employment success.

For students who do not choose to participate in summer LEAP or school year retreats, DBVI staff work with several partners to establish work experiences in a students' local community. In some situations a DBVI Counselor can make connections with the school-based employment specialist to assist a student, or connect them with employment related workshops and other school based activities. It is the intent of DBVI to make sure all visually impaired students have the opportunity for multiple work experiences before the exit high school.

The combination of these strategies and DBVI Counselor involvement makes it possible for Vermont students to access the 5-core Pre-ETS as identified in WIOA.

The five required activities are:

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
- Instruction in self-advocacy, including peer mentoring

**DBVI considers a student with a disability to be:**

- **Between the ages of 14 and 21;**
- **Is in an educational program; and**
- **Is eligible for and receiving special education or related services under IDEA or is an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act**

### [Pre-ETS Budget Forecasting](#)

**The Vermont Department of Education has indicated in their “Unduplicated Child Count” report that there are approximately 50 potentially eligible students in secondary education who are blind, visually impaired, or Deaf-Blind this school year.**

- **DBVI is currently serving 32 secondary students (17 PAS and 15 Open VR) and 12 post-secondary ages 14 through 21.**
- **DBVI projects 42 students for this current school year.**

## Pre-ETS Budget Forecasting

**Pre-employment transition services are comprised of the five required activities and nine authorized activities. There must be enough funds available to be able to offer the five required activities to students with disabilities. If there is any money remaining, that money is used towards the nine authorized activities.**

### **FFY 1019--As of September 30, 2019:**

- **\$230,000 (15% reserve requirement + carry over/re-allotment)**
- **\$10,000 was spent on staff time and associated expenses**
- **\$100,000 for Coordination In contracts (LEAP, CCS)**
- **\$120,000 was spent on the 5 required Pre-ETS Transition Service Areas.**
- **\$3,500 Average Cost Per Student for the 5 required Pre-ETS Services (based on 35 students).**
- **\$0 was spent/encumbered on the nine authorized pre-employment transition services**

Calculation: Agency 15% Reserve Requirement= \$230,000; Number of students served=35; Total Pre-ETS Required Activities= \$120,000; Average Cost Per Student= \$3,500 Total Pre-ETS Coordination Activities= \$110,000; Total Pre-ETS Expenditures= \$230,000; Amount Available for Authorized Activities= \$0

### **Projections for FFY 2020 and 2021:**

- **\$220,000 (15% reserve requirement + carry over/re-allotment)**
- **\$10,000 was spent on staff time and associated expenses**
- **\$100,000 for Coordination In contracts (LEAP, CCS)**
- **\$110,000 was spent on the 5 required Pre-ETS Transition Service Areas.**
- **\$3,500 Average Cost Per Student for the 5 required Pre-ETS Services (based on 35 students).**
- **\$0 was spent/encumbered on the nine authorized pre-employment transition services**

Calculation: Agency 15% Reserve Requirement= \$220,000; Number of students served=35; Total Pre-ETS Required Activities= \$110,000; Average Cost Per Student= \$3,200 Total Pre-ETS Coordination Activities= \$110,000; Total Pre-ETS Expenditures= \$220,000; Amount Available for Authorized Activities= \$0

A statewide estimate of students exiting/graduating high school at the end of SY 2020 is 14 students. The were 10 students statewide who graduated in SY 2019.

## **2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and**

DBVI partners help us achieve the results our consumers expect. One finding of the statewide survey and focus groups identifies adaptive skills training as one of the top two services that help them achieve their goals. People who lose vision need to learn



new adaptive skills to remain independent at home and work. DBVI contracts with the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide Certified Orientation and Mobility Instructors, Rehabilitation and Low Vision Therapists. These instructors teach the skills and DBVI consumer report being more independent because of their new skills. This need for adaptive skills training is ranked very high in all sections of the CSNA and survey results show a high level of satisfaction with their skill gain results. The other major DBVI community partner is the Vermont Industry for Business, Industry and Rehabilitation. DBVI contracts with VABIR to provide job development and employment consultant services. VABIR creates relationships with Vermont business and helps match DBVI consumers with business needs. In many instances this begins with a work experience and leads to employment. The CSNA does identify more job training as a need. VABIR provides those opportunities through progressive employment and satisfaction for these services ranks high.

**3. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act .**

DBVI coordinates with several partners to meet the pre-employment and transition service needs of students. The DBVI Director and Counselors meet monthly with the Management Team of the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. VABVI has a statewide contract from the Vermont Agency of Education to provide a statewide network of the Teachers of the Visually Impaired. The TVI's provide academic support and direct instruction to all blind and visually impaired students in Vermont. The intent of these monthly meeting is to coordinate the efforts of both agencies to support student transition needs. DBVI Counselors and TVIs in their region also meet regularly to discuss students' transition and pre-employment needs. This helps the counselor to connect students with the 5-core Pre-ETS activities by making arrangements for local work experiences, school-based employment activities, Summer LEAP, or school year LEAP job readiness retreats. There is also a monthly meeting of DBVI partner organizations called the Connections Team. The intent of this group is to discuss student needs and develop strategies that provide work experiences or job readiness opportunities in local communities or at the state level.

The DBVI Director also meets quarterly at the Agency of Education with the AOE Special Education State Director, the AOE High School Special Education Consultant, the AOE Adult Basic Education Consultant, the Director of General VR, the Director of Developmental Services, and the Director of the Assistive Technology Program. The intent of this group is to stay connected with overlap needs of WIOA and IDEA. The most current topic is discussions about the new personal learning plans and how transition serviced can be incorporated.

Other important initiatives include DBVI cosponsoring with General VR a statewide conference of all local Core Transition Teams. All regions of the state have monthly meetings of school personnel and local human service providers to discuss local transition resources for students. Several workshops and guest speakers provided information about best practice for student transition. There was also time for local teams to meet and discuss strategies for their region.

A new development is the formation of a Student Advisory Council. The DBVI Director will participate in an annual event that is planned by Vermont Students with disabilities. This is just getting started and the first event will be next school year.

The ultimate need is to work together with AOE and local schools to help students to use their IEP and Personal Learning Plans to create a great transition to employment training or work. DBVI has created transition action plan forms that are used for each student for entering the workforce directly, attending vocational training, or attending college. The needs for each of these future goals are specified on each form. The forms help guide the Local Education Agency IEP and 504 teams as they plan for the unique transition service needs of students who are blind or visually impaired.

### **Section k. Annual Estimates**

American Foundation for the Blind- Reviewing the Disability Employment Research on People who are Blind or Visually Impaired

<https://www.afb.org/research-and-initiatives/employment/reviewing-disability-employment-research-people-blind-visually>

The American Foundation for the Blind's (AFB) Public Policy and Research Center conducted a literature review on employment and workers with disabilities.

The following key takeaways provided by AFB look into the larger picture of employment in the United States for people who are blind or visually impaired:

- Over half of working-age people who are blind or visually impaired are not in the labor market, meaning they are not working and not seeking work, compared with fewer than a quarter of people without disabilities.
  - Only 44 percent of people who are blind or visually impaired are employed, compared with 79 percent of those without disabilities.
  - Workers who are blind or visually impaired were more likely to be employed part-time or for only part of the year than those with no disability.
  - Among workers who are blind or visually impaired, 32 percent worked either part time or only part of the year in 2016, compared with 25 percent of those without a disability.
- The following estimates below are for the State of Vermont and it's outlook on the previous year as well as the year ahead.

Describe:

#### **1. The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services;**

2018 Disability Status Report--Vermont

American Community Survey

<https://data.census.gov/>

Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S. (2018). 2018 Disability Status Report: Vermont. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability (YTI).

[www.disabilitystatistics.org](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org)

**Summary of Overall Vermont Data**

Content provided by the US Census bureau for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018

<https://data.census.gov/>

**Age**--In 2018, the prevalence of disability in VT was:

- 14.5 percent for persons of all ages
- .7 percent for persons under the age of 5
- 8.4 percent for persons ages 5 to 17
- 8.0 percent for persons ages 18 to 34
- 13.5 percent for persons ages 35 to 64
- 24.3 percent for persons ages 65 to 74
- 44.3 percent for persons ages 75+

**Disability Type**--In 2018, the prevalence of the six disability types among persons of all ages in VT was:

- 2.4% reported a Visual Disability
- 5.0% reported a Hearing Disability
- 6.7% reported an Ambulatory Disability
- 6.2% reported a Cognitive Disability
- 2.4% reported a Self-Care Disability
- 5.4% reported an Independent Living Disability

**Gender**--In 2018, 14.1 percent of females of all ages and 15.0 percent of males of all ages in VT reported a disability.

**Race**--In VT in 2018, the prevalence of disability for working-age people (ages 21 to 64) was:

- 14.6 percent among Whites
- 16.2 percent among Black / African Americans
- 26.8 percent among American Indian and Alaska Native
- 4.7 percent among Asians
- 9.6 percent among Hispanic or Latino

### **Populations in Households in Vermont\*\*\***

Content provided by the US Census bureau for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018

<https://data.census.gov/>

- Ages under 5= 28,810
- Ages 5 to 9= 32,019
- Ages 10 to 14= 33,938
- Ages 15 to 19= 42,229
- Ages 20 to 24= 43,479
- Ages 25 to 34= 75,058
- Ages 35 to 44= 70,113
- Ages 45 to 54= 80,695
- Ages 55 to 59= 47,049
- Ages 60 to 64= 49,034

- Ages 65 to 74= 75,755
- Ages 75 to 84= 34,971
- Ages 85 and over= 13,149

### **Number of Individuals who are minorities**

Content provided by the US Census bureau for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018

<https://data.census.gov/>

- Total population of Vermont= 626,299
- White- 589,337
- Two or More Races=12,785
- Hispanic or Latino=12,450
- Asian=11,859
- Black or African=7,621
- American Indian=1,743
- Another Race=3,240
- Native Hawaiian=139

### **Summary of Visual Disability data in Vermont—American Community Survey**

Is this person blind or does he/she have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?

#### **Working Age Adults**

DBVI estimates from the American Community Survey that there are approximately 6,854 Vermonters of working age (18-64) who are blind or severely visually impaired (meaning even with correction they are not able to easily read the newspaper). DBVI provides RSA defined services to approximately 3.6% of these individuals annually. Content provided by the US Census bureau for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018

<https://data.census.gov/>

- Visual Disability Total= 14,804 (2.4% of 620,066 VT population)
- Ages 5 to 17= 1,243 (1.4 % of 86,410)
- Age 18 to 34= 1,372 (1.0% of 138,718)
- Age 35 to 64= 5,482 (2.2% of 245,563)
- Age 65 to 74= 2,929 (3.9% of 74,986)
- Age 75 and Older= 3,665 (8.0% of 45,579)

#### **Education Rate in Vermont with Visual Disability**

2017 Statistics via Cornell University at [www.disabilitystatistics.org](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org)

Less than High School=800 (11.9% of 6,900)\*\*\*

A HS diploma or equivalent=2,500 (35.5% of 6,900)

Some college/associates degree=1000 (13.8% of 6,900)

College Bachelor's Degree or more=2,400 (34.7% of 6,900)

### **Number of Youth who are Deaf-Blind**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/189sATr89VCj650qtBeU29jtRGWS9yN-6JJxrEVw9YGs/edit?usp=sharing>

Ages 12 to 17=11

Ages 18 to 21=3

### **DBVI Projections for PY 2019**

- The cost per employment outcome will remain at the \$18,000 to \$19,000 level.
- Employment outcomes will increase to 50.

### **DBVI Projections for Case Status Information PY 2019:**

- The number of new plans will be 40.
- The number of individuals served through supported employment will be 5.
- The number of new applications to increase to 70.

### **DBVI Projections for students receiving Pre-ETS**

PY 2019 projection is 45.

### **Data from RSA 113:**

#### **New Applications**

- FFY 2015---102
- FFY 2016---81
- FFY 2017---53
- FFY 2018--- 77
- FFY 2019---19 (To Date)

#### **Individuals Implementing Plan, on hand October 1<sup>st</sup>**

- FFY 2016---231
- FFY 2017---206
- FFY 2018---179

#### **Number of Employment Plans Developed:**

- FFY 2015---111
- FFY 2016---77
- FFY 2017---48
- FFY 2018---72

#### **Achieve Employment Outcome**

- FFY 2015---90
- FFY 2016---81
- FFY 2017---64
- FFY 2018---49

#### **Closed After Services Initiated, Without Employment**

- FFY 2016---21

- FFY 2017---16
- FFY 2019---23

**Agency Expenditures Services Provided by DBVI (from RSA 2)  
Private Community Rehabilitation Programs**

- FFY 2016---\$286,990
- FFY 2017---\$265,444
- FFY 2018---\$539,566
- FFY 2019---\$464,797

**Total Innovation and Expansion Activity Costs**

- FFY 2016---\$12,900
- FFY 2017---\$17,347
- FFY 2018---\$11,518
- FFY 2019---\$12,668

**Assessment**

- FFY 2016--- \$4,886
- FFY 2017---\$3,060
- FFY 2018---\$9,578
- FFY 2019---\$5,585

**Diagnosis and Treatment of Impairments**

- FFY 2016---\$43,493
- FFY 2017---\$39,193
- FFY 2018---\$41,702
- FFY 2019---\$48,555

**Four-Year College or University Training**

- FFY 2016---\$49,517
- FFY 2017---\$47,567
- FFY 2018---\$45,128
- FFY 2019---\$50,661

**Occupational or Vocational Training**

- FFY 2016---\$112,178
- FFY 2017---\$33,770
- FFY 2018---\$2,678
- FFY 2019---\$7,606

**Job Readiness Training**

- FFY 2016---\$101,347
- FFY 2017---\$200,456
- FFY 2018---\$381,760
- FFY 2019---\$297,586

**Disability Related Skills Training**

- FFY 2016---\$70,297
- FFY 2017---\$48,022
- FFY 2018---\$75,594
- FFY 2019---\$41,471

## **Transportation**

- FFY 2016---\$61,280
- FFY 2017---\$55,921
- FFY 2018---\$24,637
- FFY 2019---\$43,455

## **Total SE Program Service Expenditure**

- FFY 2016---\$7,335
- FFY 2017---\$8,306
- FFY 2018---\$0
- FFY 2019---\$2,523

## **Assessment, Counseling, Guidance, and Placement**

- FFY 2011--\$784,571
- FFY 2012--\$805,115
- FFY 2013—\$913,971
- FFY 2014—\$844,885
- FFY 2015--\$863,383
- FFY 2016---\$923,154
- FFY 2017---\$1,000,008
- FFY 2018---\$932,204
- FFY 2019---\$872,520

## **Total Section 110 Funds Expended on Service:**

- FFY 2011—\$561,317
- FFY 2012—\$630,236
- FFY 2013—\$621,521
- FFY 2014--\$643,503
- FFY 2015--\$852,930
- FFY 2016---\$736,425
- FFY 2017---\$706,782

## **2. The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:**

### **A. The VR Program; Budget Forecasting**

DBVI estimates the following number of individuals will receive services for PY 20 and PY 21:

- Individuals who are deaf-blind (Using the HKNC definition) =10 each year.
- Students who receive Pre-ETS services as a Pre-Application student = 50 each year.
- Students in high school and open in the DBVI VR program = 40 each year.
- Students in college =10 each year.

**The Vermont Department of Education has indicated in their “Unduplicated Child Count” report that there are approximately 50 eligible or potentially eligible**

**students in secondary education who are blind, visually impaired, or Deaf-Blind in the school year.**

#### Pre-ETS Budget Forecasting

**Pre-employment transition services are comprised of the five required activities and nine authorized activities. There must be enough funds available to be able to offer the five required activities to students with disabilities. If there is any money remaining, that money is used towards the nine authorized activities.**

#### **FFY 1019--As of September 30, 2019:**

- **\$230,000 (15% reserve requirement + carry over/re-allotment)**
- **\$10,000 was spent on staff time and associated expenses**
- **\$100,000 for Coordination In contracts (LEAP, CCS)**
- **\$120,000 was spent on the 5 required Pre-ETS Transition Service Areas.**
- **\$3,500 Average Cost Per Student for the 5 required Pre-ETS Services (based on 35 students).**
- **\$0 was spent/encumbered on the nine authorized pre-employment transition services**

Calculation: Agency 15% Reserve Requirement= \$230,000; Number of students served=35; Total Pre-ETS Required Activities= \$120,000; Average Cost Per Student= \$3,500 Total Pre-ETS Coordination Activities= \$110,000; Total Pre-ETS Expenditures= \$230,000; Amount Available for Authorized Activities= \$0

#### **Projections for FFY 2020 and 2021:**

- **\$220,000 (15% reserve requirement + carry over/re-allotment)**
- **\$10,000 was spent on staff time and associated expenses**
- **\$100,000 for Coordination In contracts (LEAP, CCS)**
- **\$110,000 was spent on the 5 required Pre-ETS Transition Service Areas.**
- **\$3,500 Average Cost Per Student for the 5 required Pre-ETS Services (based on 35 students).**
- **\$0 was spent/encumbered on the nine authorized pre-employment transition services**

Calculation: Agency 15% Reserve Requirement= \$220,000; Number of students served=35; Total Pre-ETS Required Activities= \$110,000; Average Cost Per Student= \$3,200 Total Pre-ETS Coordination Activities= \$110,000; Total Pre-ETS Expenditures= \$220,000; Amount Available for Authorized Activities= \$0

A statewide estimate of students exiting/graduating high school at the end of SY 2020 is 14 students. The were 10 students statewide who graduated in SY 2019.

#### **DBVI considers a student with a disability to be:**

- **Between the ages of 14 and 21;**



- **Is in an educational program; and**
- **Is eligible for and receiving special education or related services under IDEA or is an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act**

B. The Supported Employment Program; and

DBVI has consistently increased or maintained the number of individuals served.

- FFY 2011=4; FFY 2012=10; FFY 2013=7; FFY 2014=10; FFY 2015=10; FFY 2016=11; FFY 2017=14; FFY 2018=10; FFY 2019=10.
- FFY 2020---10 (Projection)
- FFY 2021---10 (Projection)

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

NA.

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

NA.

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

See above Agency Expenditures Services Provided by DBVI (from RSA 2).

## **(I) State's Goals and Priorities.**

### **Section I. State Goals and Priorities**

The designated State unit must:

#### **1. Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed**

Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

Based on the DBVI/SRC Needs Assessment completed in December of 2017, DBVI and the SRC have established targets for Program Year 2020 for DBVI's Strategic Plan goals. DBVI and the SRC have also established goals and priorities in response to the new mandates and requirements included in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA). DBVI and the SRC established goals and priorities related to the implementation of the WIOA Common Performance Measures. All DBVI goals and priorities are established within the Division's long-established strategic themes for all participants of the DBVI program as follows:

- Economic Independence.
- Blindness Related Adaptive Skill Building (Assistive Technology; Low Vision; O+M; Blindness Rehabilitation Evaluation and Teaching).
- Delivering DBVI service well and assisting individuals to become better off.
- Expanding program growth and partnerships.

### **(A) Program Year 2020 Goals and Priorities**

#### **1. DBVI will align services to support consumers in achieving the WIOA Common Performance Outcome Measures.**

DBVI is a strong supporter of the WIOA Common Performance Measures. The new measures support consumers in their career goals and promote higher wages and more sustainable employment. The WIOA measures are extremely lagging, meaning most of the desired outcomes occur well after services end. For example, the measure of median earnings occurs two full quarters after case closure. As a result, the measures are not very useful in guiding the work of DBVI staff on a day-to-day basis. DBVI decided to establish the following leading measures:

- Leading Measure One: The use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.
- Leading Measure Two: The use of blindness adaptive skill evaluation and training.
- Leading Measure Three: The use of blindness assistive technology evaluation and training.

Targets for the Lead Indicators:

- 50% of cases will include use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.
- 50% of cases will include blindness adaptive skill evaluation and training.
- 50% of cases will include blindness assistive technology evaluation and training.

**2. DBVI will increase the percentage of consumers earning more than minimum wage at closure.**

DBVI believes that in order to increase median earnings six months post closure, the agency must increase earnings at closure.

PY 2017 data show that:

- 27.7% of DBVI consumers were earning 110% of minimum wage or less at closure
- 72.3% of DBVI consumers were earning over 110% of minimum wage at closure (44.7% had wage rates at or above 150% of the minimum wage).

These numbers improved by Program Year 2018 as follows:

- 20% had wage rates at or below 110% of the minimum wage at closure
- 80% had wage rates at or above 110% of minimum wage at closure (44.4% had wage rates at or above 150% of the minimum wage).

**3. DBVI will increase consumer opportunities to participate in post-secondary education and training and gain industry recognized credentials.**

Post-secondary credentials are a proven mechanism for consumers to access higher wage employment and meaningful careers. In Program Year 2018, 30 participants were enrolled in programs potentially leading to a credential, and 9 participants completed a post-secondary degree or industry-recognized credential.

Targets:

Program Year 2020 Target: 35 DBVI consumers will enroll in training leading to a credential and 12 DBVI consumers will achieve a credential.

Program Year 2021 Target: 40 DBVI consumers will enroll in training leading to a credential and 15 DBVI consumers will achieve a credential.

**4. In partnership with VDOL and Community Partners, DBVI will create more opportunities for DBVI consumers to participate in these programs.**

DOL programs can offer DBVI consumers the opportunity to earn money while receiving necessary training to achieve a credential and higher wage employment.

Case note and other evidence suggest that 12 cases in PY 2018 (July 2018 – June 2019) had DOL involvement.

Targets:

Program Year 2020: 4 DBVI consumers will enroll in a DOL program.

Program Year 2021: 4 DBVI consumers will enroll in a DOL program.

**5. DBVI will continue to implement highly effective Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students statewide.**

- Total number of youth served with a DBVI IPE= 54 (PY 2018)
- Total number of students in school and under age 22 served in PY 2018 with a DBVI IPE= 34 (PY 2018)
- DBVI has successfully expanded our services overall to youth. The percentage of population served who were under age 22 at entry into DBVI services has grown from 17% of people served in SFY 2014 to 29% of people served in SFY 2019.

**6. DBVI will partner with DVR and CWS to continue to expand efforts to effectively serve employers through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS).**

Employer engagement continues to be a critical activity to ensure DVR and DBVI consumers have access to employment opportunities and careers. Creative Workforce Solutions is the employer engagement and marketing arm of DVR and DBVI. DVR and DBVI measures employer engagement through the following three metrics:

- New Employer Contacts: These are defined as new contacts with employers who have never engaged with CWS
- Employer Activities: These are defined as ongoing engagement activities with employers who have an ongoing relationship with CWS
- Employer Opportunities: These are defined as specific consumer opportunities such as a job opening, training opportunity, work based learning opportunity, company tour or informational interview

The annual targets for the CWS team for Program Years 2020 and 2021 are as follows:

- Contacts: 750 new contacts per program year
- Activities: 2,250 distinct engagement activities per program year
- Opportunities: 2,500 discrete consumer opportunities developed per program year

**7. DBVI will continue to seek opportunities to expand and/or improve services for underserved populations including individuals who need supported employment.**

DBVI recognizes that there continue to be populations of Vermonters with disabilities that are unserved or underserved in the state. These include, but are not limited to:

- Individuals with severe disabilities who need supported employment services but are not eligible for long term supports through the Division of Developmental Services or the Department of Mental Health.
- Individuals who are deaf-blind.

DBVI will partner with DVR to explore opportunities to expand or improve services to address the unmet needs of these groups. This includes exploring new partnerships or expanding existing partnerships with other agencies, funding sources and stakeholders.

**8. DBVI will continue to track consumer satisfaction with the program's services through the Tri-annual consumer satisfaction survey.**

DBVI contracts tri-annually with an independent survey organization to assess consumer satisfaction statewide. This data is critical to helping us improve services and provide better customer service. DBVI has consistently maintained high overall rates of satisfaction.

The most recent results of the 3-year statewide random survey of all participants in the DBVI Vocational Vision Rehabilitation program was Conducted by Market Decisions in 2017 The next statewide survey is scheduled for November/December 2020.

- 93% of respondents said they are satisfied with the DBVI vocational rehabilitation program.
- 93% of respondents said overall, they are better off as a result of the services they received from DBVI.
- 95% of respondents said that DBVI staff treated them with dignity and respect.
- 94% of respondents said that DBVI helped them achieve their vocational rehabilitation goals.
- 92% of respondents said that DBVI services met their expectations.
- 89% of respondents said that DBVI vocational rehabilitation services helped them become more independent.
- 84% of respondents said that DBVI helped them reach their job goals.

Targets:

- In the 2020 Consumer Satisfaction Survey, at least 95% of respondents will report that they are satisfied with the DBVI vocational rehabilitation program.

**(B) Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.**

See Goal 7.

**(C) Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:**

The goals were developed as part of DBVI's comprehensive needs assessment which included town meetings, surveys, focus groups, journal research, and staff/SRC input. DBVI staff met several times to review the needs of all results with the SRC to

determine the goals. These are outlined in the input from the SRC and the statewide assessment sections.

Based on the data gathered and discussions with the State Rehabilitation Council and DBVI, the following are the key findings of the 2017 DBVI Needs Assessment.

- DBVI needs to identify and implement strategies to increase consumer hourly wages at closure.
- DBVI consumers need opportunities to gain industry recognized credentials in skilled professions.
- DBVI must develop strategies to meet and exceed the outcome targets under the Common Performance Measures.

The WIOA Common Performance Measures significantly change the way DBVI is measured. The emphasis on career development, credential attainment, and measurable skills gains, will require DBVI to consider changing current practice. As previously noted, DBVI will be looking at strategies to increase wages and assist consumers in obtaining industry recognized credentials. In addition, DBVI will continue to help consumers develop a career path.

**(D) The State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA.**

In Program Year 2018, sufficient data collection had occurred to begin reporting on three of the five measures that are reported at the program level (employer engagement is reported as a combined measure for all WIOA core partners):

- Employment rate in the second quarter post closure was 49%
- Median earnings in the second quarter post closure was \$3,516
- Measurable skill gains rate was 54.9% compared to 37.8% in PY 2017

**(E) Other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.**

DBVI reviewed data provided on the RSA MIS query tools for performance measures, which are included in the FFY 2018 State Plan and 2017 CSNA. These were evaluated by DBVI and the SRC and are incorporate into the new goals and strategies.

## **Section m. Order of Selection**

Describe:

### **1. Whether the designated State unit will implement and order of selection. If so, describe:**

A. The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services. DBVI does not have an order of selection.

B. The justification for the order. DBVI does not have an order of selection.

C. The service and outcome goals. DBVI does not have an order of selection.

D. The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order. DBVI does not have an order of selection.

E. How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and DBVI does not have an order of selection.

### **2. If the designated State unit has elected to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.**

DBVI does not have an order of selection.

## **Section n. Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds.**

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

DBVI realizes that it serves customers with significant disabilities who at times require vocational support beyond the scope of DBVI's standard services. It is for this reason that DBVI maintains a "Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU) with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). This MOU describes how funds will be utilized and services provided in the area of supported employment. Thus consumers who may require intensive services, beyond vision impairment issues, to acquire or maintain employment can be provided with the needed support. This MOU provides \$30,000 of Title VI, Part B funds to DVR's Supported Employment Program. In exchange DBVI is able to have consumers avail themselves of a comprehensive and established program providing statewide coverage and the expertise of supported employment providers. Because of the multiple barriers that some DBVI consumers face, the DVR Supported Employment Coordinator helps to determine the most appropriate agency for those with multiple disabilities. DVR may be the more appropriate agency for DBVI consumers in cases where multiple disabilities are present. This coordination, with extensive knowledge of statewide resources, particularly in areas of psychiatric and developmental disability services, can provide technical assistance and the ability to

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

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

A. the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and  
DBVI has an agreement with a designated agency that specializes in employment for youth who need supported employment. This is in addition to the collaboration with DVR, and is intended to meet the needs of youth.

B. how the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

See N.1. above.



## **Section o. State's Strategies to Achieve Goals and Priorities**

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

### **1. The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.**

In Section (I) of the State Plan, DBVI outlined its goals and priorities for Program Year 2020. The eight strategic goals established by DBVI and the SRC are as follows:

- A. DBVI will align services to support consumers in achieving the WIOA Common Performance Outcome Measures.
- B. DBVI will increase the percentage of consumers earning more than minimum wage at closure.
- C. DBVI will increase consumer opportunities to participate in post-secondary education and training and gain industry recognized credentials.
- D. In partnership with VDOL and Community Partners, DBVI will create more opportunities for DBVI consumers to participate in DOL programs.
- E. DBVI will improve the outcomes for students and youth.
- F. DBVI will continue to expand efforts to effectively serve employers through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS).
- G. DBVI will continue to seek opportunities to expand and/or improve services for underserved populations including individuals who need supported employment.
- H. DBVI will continue to track consumer satisfaction with the program's services through the Tri-annual consumer satisfaction survey.

#### **Strategy 1: DBVI will implement a series of initiatives to align staff practices, services and assignment of resources to meet the WIOA Common Performance Measures. Goals A, B, and C.**

In order to maximize DBVI outcomes under the WIOA Common Performance Measures, DBVI will implement or continue to implement the following:

- DBVI will track the three leading indicators which are:
- Leading Measure One: The use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.
- Leading Measure Two: The involvement of master's level certified blindness instructors to strengthen consumer adaptive skills in completing their employment goal.
- Leading Measure Three: Assistive technology evaluation or training to assist consumer with their employment goal.
- All DBVI staff will be trained to do vocational assessments and use assessments as a career planning tool.

- All staff will be familiar with education and training providers in their communities, as well as what career pathways and stackable credentials are offered. Counselors will be able to speak to consumers about possible career paths, based on assessments.
- BAMs (Business Account Managers) will understand the career paths in the businesses they serve.

**Strategy 2: Coordinate efforts with the Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL) and the Agency of Education (AOE) to ensure that blind and visually impaired individuals have access to employment training and other components of the workforce system. Goals A, B, C, and D.**

As noted in the Unified Section of the plan, DBVI will be working closely with DVR, VDOL and AOE to ensure DBVI consumers have access to all the workforce development opportunities available in their communities. DBVI will be implementing strategies to make this happen including the following:

- DBVI will meet regularly with VDOL to facilitate coordination of services.
- DBVI, DVR, AOE and VDOL will implement systems to track and manage co-enrollment in each other's programs.
- DBVI, with the support of DVR and AOE, will develop stronger partnerships with the local Technical Educational Centers and Adult Basic Education programs.
- DBVI will implement a plan for staying connected with all DOL partners of the AJC.
- DBVI will work closely with DOL to create and implement the Unified Plan with a common mission and vision to include all Vermonters in the workforce.
- DBVI will work with CWS local teams and DOL to obtain employment needs of companies and then match DBVI customers with specific training.
- DBVI will invite DOL and AOE to a staff meeting to discuss collaboration ideas.

**Strategy 3: Expand employer outreach and engagement efforts through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS) to effectively meet the needs of employers. Goals B and F.**

As described in Section (g) of the State Plan, CWS is the primary employer outreach and engagement infrastructure for DVR and DBVI. CWS, and in particular the Business Account Managers, have been a very effective approach to engaging employers and developing employment opportunities for DBVI consumers. DBVI will expand these efforts through the following strategies:

- Seek opportunities to coordinate employer engagement with the Vermont Department of Labor.
- Build on and expand employer events such as job fairs, employer breakfasts and business recognition events designed to engage employers.

**Strategy 4: Explore strategies to assist DBVI consumers to retain or advance in employment. Goals A, B, C and D.**

DBVI will develop and implement a systematic approach to follow up with consumers after job placement. The intent will be to re-engage the consumer at key points to determine:

- If they need or want more support to retain their employment?
- If they want assistance with career development and training in their current employment?
- If they want to pursue further career development with a different employer on in a different field?

The follow up will occur at key points after initial job placement. The first contact will be immediately after initial job placement through a congratulations letter and follow up call from the VR counselor.

The second contact will occur at 60 days post placement. The final contact will occur at three months post-employment closure.

The hope is that this systematic follow up will both help consumers retain employment and identify opportunities for career advancement.

**Strategy 5. Continue to explore strategies to develop and expand services for underserved populations including individuals who require supported employment through partnerships, grant and funding opportunities. Goals D and G.**

- DBVI will create an inclusive outreach plan that includes consumers and providers.
- Develop a set of outreach materials to be used at events across the state including outreach to minorities and underserved populations.
- Support efforts to establish Deaf-Blind SSP services in Vermont.
- Educate providers about the importance of timely referrals.
- Outreach to developmental disabilities services and mental health agencies that typically do not referred to DBVI.
- Each DBVI region will create an outreach plan for the year that includes outreach to minorities and other underserved or underrepresented individuals in each region.
- Coordinate with DVR Transition Counselors, and the Teachers of the Visually Impaired to increase the number of transition students served. Create some documents that explain what DBVI can offer.
- Create a statewide system to track all visually impaired students as they graduate high school.

**Strategy 6: Improve Outcomes for Students and Youth. Goal E.**

- Each DBVI Counselor will meet at the beginning of the school year with the Teachers of the Visually Impaired in their region to create a plan for identifying potentially eligible students and opening eligible students in the DBVI VR program.
- Each DBVI Counselor will meet with the General DVR Transition Counselor in their region.
- A DBVI Action Plan Transition form will be completed and updated annually for all eligible students.
- Participate in statewide Core Transition Teams.

- Continue to increase student participation in the summer Learn Earn and Prosper (LEAP) summer work experiences and Employment Development Retreats during the school year.

**Strategy 7: DBVI will promote employment by educating employers and providing opportunities for increased exposure to people who are blind or visually impaired. This will address “Societies reaction to blindness.” Goal F**

- Create products to bring and teach employers to understand the assistive equipment
- Create a network of ambassadors who demonstrate their assistive technology or white canes and demonstrate to the employers about how they use technology to complete work tasks and travel independently.
- Create a video of people working at their job.
- Find opportunities to show the film “Going Blind” to employer groups at Chambers, Rotary’s, and public libraries.
- Find opportunities to teach employer groups about assistive technology.
- Encourage employers to visit the DBVI website.
- Explore the idea of connecting employers through discussion group.
- Work closely with GCEPD to promote employment of people with disabilities.
- Create educational activities for White Cane Day and Disability Awareness Month in October.
- Create a PSA involving an employed individual and company.
- Offer Simulations to demonstrate—“what is it like to be blind?”

**Strategy 8. DBVI will create Consumer Driven Events to assist individuals as they prepare for employment. Goals A, B, and C**

- Continue Great Expectations consumer driven events each year.
- Create workshops to develop interpersonal and employment skills
- Create employment support groups.
- Create networking events.
- Opportunities to practice interview and job readiness skills.
- Create peer mentoring opportunities for adjustment to blindness and technology.

**Strategy 9: DBVI will create opportunities for access to information. Goals: A, B, C, and H**

- Create opportunities for Peer to Peer Technology Instruction
- DBVI will continue to expand the information on the website and will work with the SRC for ideas.
- Use Customer-Centered Culture to determine “what types of information customers really want?”
- Find ways to improve the process for the accessibility of online job applications.

**Strategy 10: DBVI will address transportation challenges. Goals: A, B, and C**

- DBVI will work with VTRANS to learn more about their “Go Vermont” website that helps people connect with all the available transportation options in their area.

- Coordinate with the Vermont Transportation Department on their new initiative and technology application that helps travelers find all the available transportation options in an area.
- Consider policy to pay for mileage and time of VABVI drivers in order to have a network of drivers available to meet transportation needs.
- Participate in system level planning.
- Assist VABVI to increase the number of volunteer drivers.
- Promote the option for DBVI to pay for the first 60 days of a ride to the job.

**Strategy 11: DBVI will improve communication with customers regarding expectations for DBVI services. Goals: A,B, and C**

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

**Strategy 12: DBVI will provide technology training for people who need to prepare for a job or succeed at a current job. Goals: A, B, and C**

- DBVI will create a consumer listserv that will be used to share technology solutions for access and work and in the community.
- Create a menu of training options ranging from expert training to independent study
- Create Peer to Peer Technology Instruction
- DBVI will problem solve to make job sites accessible through technology training.
- Use a team approach for a given situation including customer, job developer, counselor, job site technology evaluation, and training.
- DBVI will assist customers to continuously improve work related technology skills like using the internet, Microsoft Office, M312, and Adobe documents so they can do their job in the most efficient way.

**Strategy 13: DBVI will implement strategies designed to enable DBVI customers to access higher wage employment through short-term training. Goals: A, B, C, and D**

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

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

**2. How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.**

DBVI has a strong and effective process for determining assistive technology needs and delivering necessary training. The DBVI technology evaluator has been providing this service to DBVI consumers for more than 20-years. This service is consistently ranked in all surveys as the most helpful for meeting employment goals. Technology is the key for opening doors for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Our goal is to stay current and to find solutions for accessing the essential functions of a job. Technology is often the answer for creating access to job tasks. Once the technology is identified, it is installed and followed-up with on-site training.

The most common solutions involve screen magnification, screen readers, and electronic magnification. The I-Technology has created opportunities for DBVI consumers to use mobile technology for work tasks. People can now use voiceover on the iPhone to access their email, contacts, and calendars on-the-go. There are also several new apps that can take a picture of text document and have it read using voiceover. Access to information is essential to many job tasks and DBVI makes this a priority.

**3. The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.**

Data from the CSNA shows that DBVI needs to continue outreach efforts in all areas. The main strategy is for each region to implement an annual outreach plan. This plan will include general outreach and specific outreach to minority groups and underserved and underrepresented groups. These plans will vary due to the nature of each region. For example, the Northeast Kingdom is very rural and city of Burlington is very populated. Each plan will specifically include outreach to minority groups, people who are older and want to work, students, and individuals who are deaf-blind.

**4. The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the**

**receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services).**

DBVI uses several strategies to address the needs and transition. It begins with outreach to all students who are blind or visually impaired. Before school begins each year, DBVI Counselors meet the Teachers of the Visually Impaired for all high schools in their region. They review the student list and determining which are potentially eligible as Pre-Application students and which are ready to be open the DBVI VR as an “Open” case. All of these students have the opportunity to participate in the 5-core Pre-ETS services. Outreach is also made directly to students and families with an explanation about the ways DBVI can assist with Transition Planning and the availability of the 5-core Pre-ETS services.

Several strategies are used to deliver the 5-core Pre-ETS services. Some students may decide to begin as a Pre-Application student and participate in work experiences in their local communities. They may also may be connected with special job readiness training opportunities in their local high schools. Other students may choose to participate in short-term residential work-based learning or job readiness training. This strategy is necessary in Vermont because of the rural nature. Many small communities do not have any work experiences available. This approach makes it possible for students to choose from a variety of work experiences and internships in Burlington where there are many employers. During the school year there are several job readiness workshops during school vacations and weekends so students don't miss school. This approach takes several partners and has shown great results. Please see section “P” for Progress Updates.

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

See Strategies Above

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

DBVI has had a major commitment to improving our performance under section 116 of WIOA. Strategies above directly relate to improving the state's performance with respect to the WIOA Common Performance Measures.

DBVI will continue to use the Creative Workforce System to connect DBVI consumers with employers. Progressive Employment continues to be very effective. Many DBVI consumers begin with a work experience and eventually get a job at that company. Other individuals try a couple different work experiences and decide to go for more education or vocational training in an area of their interest. These experiences are always positive steps toward determining future careers and help people learn what they like and don't like. It is also a great way to educate employers about the abilities of people doing these jobs.

DBVI also supports college or vocational training which ultimately lead to good jobs. DBVI consistently ranks above the national blind agency average for wages and

number of hours worked. This result is directly connected to college and vocational training.

DBVI is in the process of developing baseline measures for credential attainment and measurable employment skill gains. These opportunities will be enhanced through collaborations with all of the WIOA partners. DBVI will evaluate what each program can offer and then connect DBVI consumers to those programs.

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

DBVI will work with DOL and AOE to maximize integration of individuals who are blind or visually impaired into the available trainings and programs. This will involve a commitment from all partners for universal design. DBVI has been a voice for this approach and provides expertise in this area.

WIOA is a great opportunity for DBVI consumers to access these programs that have typically been underutilized by this population. Access to these programs has proven to be challenging in the past and these new partnerships using universal design will certainly open doors.

### **8. How the agency's strategies will be used to:**

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

See Above (O.1).

B. support innovation and expansion activities; and

See Above (O.1).

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

DBVI has a long and successful history of collaboration with the larger General DVR Agency in Vermont to connect consumers with the most severe disabilities with the Developmental Service Agencies in Vermont. This collaboration makes it possible for students to be identified early in high school and a determination about meeting a funding priority before graduation.

In cases when students do not meet the criteria for a waiver, DBVI has established a partnership directly with a Developmental Service Agency to provide specialized job development services.



## **Section p. Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals.**

**An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:**

**A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.**

Program Year 2020 Goals and Priorities as outlined in the State Plan:

### **Goal 1. DBVI will align services to support consumers in achieving the WIOA Common Performance Outcome Measures.**

#### **Program 2018 Measures:**

- Employment retention six months post closure
- Employment retention twelve months post closure
- Median earnings six months post closure
- Credential attainment rate
- Measurable skills gains
- Employer engagement

DBVI is a strong supporter of the WIOA Common Performance Measures. The new measures support consumers in their career goals and promote higher wages and more sustainable employment. The WIOA measures are extremely lagging, meaning most of the desired outcomes occur well after services end. For example, the measure of median earnings occurs two full quarters after case closure. As a result, the measures are not very useful in guiding the work of DBVI staff on a day-to-day basis. DBVI decided to establish the following leading measures:

- Leading Measure One: The use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.
- Leading Measure Two: The use of blindness adaptive skill evaluation and training.
- Leading Measure Three: The use of blindness assistive technology evaluation and training.

#### **Targets for the Lead Indicators:**

- 50% of cases will include use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.
- 50% of cases will include blindness adaptive skill evaluation and training.
- 50% of cases will include blindness assistive technology evaluation and training.

#### **Program Year 2018 Update:**

- Measurable skills gains for DBVI= 71.7%
- National average for blind agencies in PY2018 was 28.5%

- 71% of case closures (48 of 68) had blindness adaptive skills training from Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- 71% of case closures who received Adaptive Technology Evaluation and Training.

**Goal 2. DBVI will increase the percentage of consumers earning more than minimum wage at closure.**

Program Year 2019 Measures:

- The percentage of DBVI consumers with earnings greater than 110% of minimum wage at employment closure.
- The percentage of DBVI consumers with earnings greater than 150% of minimum wage at employment closure.

Program Year 2019 Targets:

- 50% of DBVI consumers will earn 110% or greater of minimum wage at closure.
- 50% of DBVI consumers will earn 150% or greater of minimum wage at closure.

Program Year 2018 Update:

- 20% had wage rates at or below 110% of the minimum wage at closure
- 80% had wage rates at or above 110% of minimum wage at closure (44.4% had wage rates at or above 150% of the minimum wage).

**Goal 3. DBVI will increase consumer opportunities to participate in post-secondary education and training and gain industry recognized credentials.**

Program Year 2019 Measure: Number of individuals achieving credential attainment.

- Program Year 2019 Target: DBVI will be collecting baseline data during this period.

Program Year 2018 Update:

30 participants were enrolled in programs potentially leading to a credential, and 9 participants completed a post-secondary degree or industry-recognized credential.

**Goal 4. In partnership with VDOL and Community Partners, DBVI will create more opportunities for DBVI consumers to participate in these programs.**

DOL programs can offer DBVI consumers the opportunity to earn money while receiving necessary training to achieve a credential and higher wage employment.

Targets:

- Program Year 2020: 4 DBVI consumers will enroll in a DOL program.
- Program Year 2021: 6 DBVI consumers will enroll in a DOL program.

#### Program Year 2018 Update:

- 12 DBVI consumers had DOL involvement.
- 44% of case closures had services from the Vermont Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation.

#### Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- Progressive employment continues to be a very effective strategy in many ways. It is a great way for consumers to learn new job skills and build confidence. It is also a great way to educate employers about how a blind person can use simple accommodations to accomplish essential functions of the work.
- The DBVI Director has been very involved with the Unified Plan for Vermont which will bring together all of the workforce partners.
- Staff are learning about the potential partnerships to meet the need of individuals who are blind.

#### Factors that continue to impede implementation include:

- Typically partner programs are not fully accessible to individuals who are blind.
- DBVI believes the new partnerships through WIOA will lead to DBVI customers participating in the many partner programs of the Job Centers.

### **Goal 5. DBVI will continue to implement highly effective Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students statewide.**

#### Program Year 2019 Measures:

- The percentage of students participating in Pre-ETS through DBVI.
- The percentage of all potentially eligible students statewide who are participating in Pre-ETS through DBVI.

#### Program Year 2019 Targets:

- 25% of DBVI population served will be students.

#### Program Year 2018 Update:

- Total number of youth ages 14-24 served with a DBVI IPE= 54.
- Total number of students in school and under age 22 served with a DBVI IPE= 34
- DBVI has successfully expanded our services overall to students. The percentage of population served who were under age 22 at entry into DBVI services has grown from 17% of people served in SFY 2014 to 29% of people served in SFY 2019.
- Our efforts to include more students led to a higher increase in the number of participants and in the number of training hours in the LEAP program: The number of participants increased from 18 in 2014 to 74 in FFY2019. The number of work-based learning and job readiness training hours increased from 15,000 in 2014 to 21,000 in FFY2019.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- The summer LEAP program and school year weekend retreats have inspired students to believe they can work. These programs are designed to promote success at these initial employment experiences. Students receive a lot of feedback about their work performance and receive enough support for success.
- Students also learn from and encourage each other. Many of the older students become leaders and share their success experiences at college and work.
- Both programs emphasize the importance of assistive technology and create real world opportunities for practice.
- The weekend retreats focus on workplace readiness which builds a strong foundation for students in transition.

Factors that continue to impede implementation include:

- A factor that impedes progress is when students or families are not responsive to the DBVI series of Pre-Employment opportunities.

**Goal 6. DBVI will continue to expand efforts to effectively serve employers through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS).**

Program Year 2019 Measure: Employer engagement with DVR and DBVI as tracked through the CWS Salesforce account management system.

Program Year 2019 Target: DVR and DBVI will maintain active relationships with 2,500 employers statewide during the program year.

Program Year 2018 Update: CWS had relationships with 2,418 discrete employers. The CWS Business Account Managers had 5,672 record activities with those employers (introductory meetings, informational interviews and business tours). These activities generated 4,175 opportunities for DVR and DBVI consumers. An opportunity might include:

- A job shadow or informational interview
- A training placement
- An OJT placement
- A competitive job opportunity

We believe the above data indicates that CWS continues to produce robust engagement with Vermont employers resulting in increased opportunities for DVR consumers.

**Goal 7. DBVI will continue to seek opportunities to expand and/or improve services for underserved populations including individuals who need supported employment.**

DBVI recognizes that there continue to be populations of Vermonters with disabilities that are unserved or underserved in the state. These include, but are not limited to:

- Individuals with developmental disabilities who do not meet the developmental services system eligibility criteria or system of care priorities.
- Individuals with other severe disabilities, including individuals who are deaf-blind who need supported employment.

DBVI will partner with DVR to explore opportunities to expand or improve services to address the unmet needs of these groups. This includes exploring new partnerships or expanding existing partnerships with other agencies, funding sources and stakeholders.

Program Year 2019 Measure: DBVI will track and report the results of specific initiatives related to these populations.

Program Year 2019 Target: Five individuals in the above categories will receive supported employment services.

Program Year 2018 Update:

- There were 4 individuals served in PY 2018 who received supported employment services.
- There were 2 individuals served in PY 2018 with a disability impairment of “Deaf-blindness.”
- There were 9% of the caseload who identified as minorities.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- Key strategies involve effective outreach. Each region creates an inclusive regional outreach plan. Each region creates a strategy to reach out to their communities.
- It is very important to get high school students connected with SE programs before they graduate.
- DBVI provides a key role in the partnership with Developmental Services Agencies by bringing expertise in low vision and adaptive blindness skills.

Factors that continue to impede implementation include:

- The greatest challenge is getting a response from individuals who do not recognize the value of these services that can help them adapt to vision loss and find meaningful employment.
- The numbers for this population can vary greatly from year to year due to the low incidence of blindness. The key is for DBVI to stay closely connected with all visually impaired students in the state and act quickly with supported employment needs are anticipated.

**Goal 8. Consumer satisfaction with DBVI services will be maintained or increase.**

Program Year 2019 Measure: Tri-annual consumer satisfaction survey. The survey will be conducted again in November/December 2020.

Program Year 2019 Target: In the 2020 Consumer Satisfaction Survey, at least 95% of respondents will report that they are satisfied with the DBVI vocational rehabilitation program.

Consumers reported a 93% overall satisfaction in the most recent survey (2017).

Program Year 2018 Update:

DBVI contracts tri-annually with an independent survey organization to assess consumer satisfaction statewide. This data is critical to helping us improve services and provide better customer service. DBVI has consistently maintained high overall rates of satisfaction.

The most recent results of the 3-year statewide random survey of all participants in the DBVI Vocational Vision Rehabilitation program was conducted by Market Decisions in 2017. The next statewide survey is scheduled for November/December 2020.

- 93% of respondents said they are satisfied with the DBVI vocational rehabilitation program.
- 93% of respondents said overall, they are better off as a result of the services they received from DBVI.
- 95% of respondents said that DBVI staff treated them with dignity and respect.
- 94% of respondents said that DBVI helped them achieve their vocational rehabilitation goals.
- 92% of respondents said that DBVI services met their expectations.
- 89% of respondents said that DBVI vocational rehabilitation services helped them become more independent.
- 84% of respondents said that DBVI helped them reach their job goals.

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of this goal included:

- DBVI staff consistently delivers services well and help consumers to meet their goals and become better off.
- Staff are trained to use Customer-Centered Culture to obtain the Voice of the Customer as we develop strategies to accomplish desired results.
- Staff also use many of the practices in the “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” by Stephen R. Covey to create goals, organize priorities, and effectively work with consumers by understanding their needs and developing a plan of services to accomplish their goals.

## **General Program Results and Highlights**

### **Recent Developments and Accomplishments**

This year DBVI organized several events around the state to educate the public about White Cane Safety Awareness. The white cane is a symbol of strength and independence, used by people who are blind as they travel independently. Members of the public received training in safe travel techniques from an Orientation and Mobility Instructor, increasing awareness of what it is like to travel with the white cane.

The main events were held in Brattleboro, Burlington, Montpelier, and Rutland. Each included a walk guided by an Orientation and Mobility Specialist to demonstrate proper use of the white cane and safe travel techniques. These events are great opportunities to educate the public and to have meaningful discussions about how blind and visually impaired individuals travel independently within their communities.

In addition to educational events, DBVI collaborates with several partners to create Vision Rehabilitation Teams. This year DBVI hosted a partner event at the annual State Rehabilitation Council meeting. Attendees included partners from the Agency of Education, Department of Labor, Community Rehabilitation Provider, Developmental Service, The Assistive Technology Program, Vocational Rehabilitation, and more. Participants had an opportunity to attend concurrent sessions that included detailed information about Orientation and Mobility Instruction; Low Vision Eye Examinations; Assistive Technology Evaluation and Training; Assessment Instruments for individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired; Job Development; and Blindness Adaptive Skills Training. The feedback from the event emphasized how useful it was to learn how the partners of a Vision Rehabilitation team work together to assist an individual in pursuing their employment and independence goals.

DBVI also partnered and assisted with the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Vermont Transition Core Teams Conference. This statewide event brought together Transition Core Teams from schools and employment service providers to share ideas about how to assist students with disabilities with their employment goals. In addition, DBVI partnered with VR Vermont for several events for the newly formed Student Advocacy Council. Several DBVI staff and consumers joined the planning team for the events.

DBVI has a commitment to ongoing training of staff to deliver services well. This year one staff member entered a master's program to become a Blind Services Rehabilitation Counselor. This individual is learning the latest techniques and strategies to help individuals explore and find a great career match.

### **Future Directions**

DBVI believes the best path forward includes a solid foundation in technology. Relevant new technologies emerge every day, and our staff stay current to help our customers achieve their employment and independence goals. One recent technology is an app called Voice Dream Scanner, which allows people to gain access to print documents. The user takes a picture of the paper document with the phone's camera and the app converts it to speech output. This provides access to information and makes it possible to accomplish many tasks independently.

DBVI staff recognize the importance of helping consumers learn more about their own interests and strengths for employment. DBVI recently established a workgroup called the Investigation Empowerment Improvement Team. The purpose of this group is to provide DBVI consumers with increased opportunities for self-knowledge through assessment tools. This initiative will help participants to:

- Learn about interests, skills, and abilities for future career direction.

- Increase knowledge of Visual Impairment.
- Identify adaptive skills training that will decrease functional limitations.
- Increase self-knowledge.
- Provide information for consumer career decision making.
- Identify transferrable skills.

This year the team evaluated several assessments and adapted them for accessibility when possible. DBVI believes that the approved instruments will help individuals gain self-knowledge and assist them as they pursue their employment goals. The team also established a fully accessible assessment workstation at the DBVI Montpelier office. This includes all the adaptive technology necessary for consumers to complete assessments independently.

In an annual closure surveys DBVI participants shared examples of how their new skills have helped them adapt to vision loss, maintain employment, and improve their quality of life. They reported being better off because they can now:

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

### **Services to Students**

DBVI has been very successful in expanding Pre-ETS services for students who are blind or visually impaired by providing work-experiences, internships, and job readiness training to build skills necessary for career development. Learn, Earn, and Prosper (LEAP) is a program developed by DBVI to achieve these goals. Most students participate by living and working in the Burlington area in the summer. Other students participate to build job readiness skills during school year retreats and work experiences in their local communities. Our efforts to include more students led to a higher increase in the number of participants and in the number of training hours:

- The number of participants increased from 18 in 2014 to 74 in 2019.
- The number of work-based learning and job readiness training hours increased from 15,000 in 2014 to 21,000 in 2019.

The LEAP summer work experiences and school year retreats have resulted in significant skill gains for students developing employment and independent living skills that are essential for future employment. Each student receives a report of their progress which is shared with school teams, teachers of the visually impaired, and DBVI counselors. Students learn to identify their strengths and areas of vocational interest. They also learn specific job readiness skills including respect in the workplace, assistive technology, transportation strategies, workplace relationships, personal finance, interview practice, building a strong resume, and networking.



Students also received specialized services necessary to develop adaptive skills related to their blindness including Orientation and Mobility (O&M), Vision Rehabilitation Therapy, and Instruction in Assistive Technology. This resulted in a significant positive impact in their mobility skills in the community and at the work site. LEAP students received over 230 hours of O&M Instruction in 2019, as well as 40 hours in VRT (Vision Rehabilitation Therapy), and 400 hours in assistive technology instruction by a CATIS (Certified Assistive Technology Instructional Specialist).

DBVI has successfully expanded our services overall to youth. The percentage of population served who were under age 22 at entry into DBVI services has grown from 17% of people served in SFY 2014 to 29% of people served in SFY 2019.

Providing real work-based learning experiences in actual employment settings is one of the most effective ways to prepare youth for long term success. Therefore, DBVI has invested more resources in providing real-world internship opportunities. Internship placements at Vermont businesses include the Burlington Free Press, Burlington City Arts, Sangha Yoga Studio, Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports, Vermont Community Gardens Network, the Overlook Café, the Waterbury Café, the Courthouse Café, the Flynn Theatre, Mt. Mansfield Media, Sara Holbrook Community Center, The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, and the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. In 2019, 4 out of 5 interns were enrolled in college programs after LEAP, and the remaining Intern is working with their DBVI counselor to match their skills to a career path.

“I embraced challenges and new opportunities, worked on my leadership skills, and learned to not be afraid of communicating with people when I am unsure or need help with something.”

-LEAP Intern, Sangha Yoga Studio

“I learned that some things take time to learn, and you just have to be patient. I also learned the importance of communicating directly with people so they can help you meet your needs. I learned that it’s ok to be open and vulnerable with people to ensure that you establish trust with them.”

-LEAP Intern, Vermont Association of the Blind and Visually Impaired

DBVI staff work towards continuous improvement by listening to the voice of customers and using that information and data to improve performance. An updated DBVI State Plan was completed and approved by the State Rehabilitation Council in February 2020 and can be found at <https://dbvi.vermont.gov/resources/publications>. Please also visit the success story link on the DBVI website at [www.dbvi.vermont.gov](http://www.dbvi.vermont.gov) to see examples of people reaching their goals.

1.

A. See Above (P.1.A.).

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

See Above (P.1.A.).

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

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

See Above (P.1.A.).

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

See Above (P.1.A.).

3. The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.

In Program Year 2018 sufficient data collection had occurred to begin reporting on three of the five measures that are reported at the program level (employer engagement is reported as a combined measure for all WIOA core partners):

- Employment rate in the second quarter post closure was 49%
- Median earnings in the second quarter post closure was \$3,516
- Measurable skill gains rate was 54.9% compared to 37.8% in PY 2017

4. How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.

See strategies about LEAP in (P.1.A.) above.

#### **Section q. Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services.**

Include the following:

**1. The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.**

See Above (P.1.A.).

**2. The timing of transition to extended services.**

See Above (P.1.A.).

#### **(r) Certifications.**

**Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate:**

Vermont Agency of Human Services

**Name of designated State agency:**

Vermont Agency of Human Services

**Full Name of Authorized Representative:**

Michael Smith

**Title of Authorized Representative:**

Secretary

**States must provide written and signed certifications that:**

1. The designated State agency or designated State unit (as appropriate) listed above is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA\*, and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.\*\*

Yes

2. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the designated State agency listed above agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan.

Yes

3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan\*, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan.\*\*

Yes

4. The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.

Yes

5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.

Yes

6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.

Yes

7. The Authorized Representative listed above has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.

Yes

8. The Authorized Representative listed above has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services.

Yes

9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

Yes

#### **Additional Comments on the Certifications from the State**

1. Certification Regarding Lobbying- Vocational Rehabilitation

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements the undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

- A. No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.
- B. If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions
- C. The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, sub grants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

## Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

### **Applicant's Organization:**

Agency of Human Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

### **Full Name of Authorized Representative:**

Michael Smith

### **Title of Authorized Representative:**

Secretary

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable)  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>). If applicable, please print, sign, and email to [MAT\\_OCTAE@ed.gov](mailto:MAT_OCTAE@ed.gov)

## 2. Certification Regarding Lobbying- Supported Employment

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

- A. No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.
- B. If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

- C. The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, sub grants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that: If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

**Applicant's Organization:**

Agency of Human Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

**Full Name of Authorized Representative:**

Michael Smith

**Title of Authorized Representative:**

Secretary

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable)  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>).

**Assurances**

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit

the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances: The State Plan must provide assurances that:

1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures:

The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.

2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement:

The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.

3. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:

- A. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- B. the establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council
- C. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- D. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).
- E. the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- F. The designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds  
No
- G. the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs:  
No
- H. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan.

No

- I. the descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.

No

- J. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- K. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- L. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- M. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- N. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.

4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services:

The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:

- A. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- B. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- C. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act?
- D. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.  
Agency will provide the full range of services described above
- E. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- F. comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.



- G. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- H. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- I. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs
- J. with respect to students with disabilities, the State, has developed and will implement strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25)).

5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:

- A. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act
- B. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
- C. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act.

6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:

- A. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act.

- B. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.

7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:

- A. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.

- B. The designated State agency assures that:

the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act

an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act , which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

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### **Certification 1 Footnotes**

\* Public Law 113-128.

\*\* Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.

### **Certification 2 Footnotes**

\* All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

\*\* No funds under title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

\*\*\* Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76,77,79,81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3485; and the State VR Services Program regulations.

### **Certification 3 Footnotes**

\* No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

\*\* Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in \*\*\* under Certification 2 footnotes