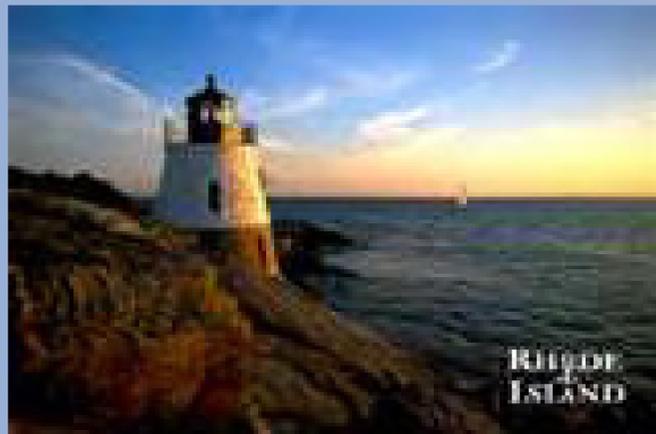


Rhode Island  
Department of Human Services  
Office of Rehabilitation Services  
and the  
Rhode Island  
State Rehabilitation Council



**2007**  
**Annual Report**

*The Mission of the Rhode Island  
Office of Rehabilitation Services is*

“To empower individuals with disabilities to choose,  
prepare for, obtain and maintain employment, economic  
self-sufficiency, independence and integration into society.”



*Values*

We value the worth, dignity, rights, responsibilities, and empowerment of all  
person with disabilities in achieving their individualized goals.

We value staff who reflect pride and commitment to excellence  
in achieving our mission.

We value a management style that fosters responsibility and accountability  
while encouraging creativity, initiative, and leadership throughout the  
organization.

We value community support in achieving the agency's mission.

We value leadership which promotes clarity of purpose.

**Governor, Donald L. Carcieri**  
**DHS Director, Gary D. Alexander**

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## Message from the Director



It is my pleasure to provide you with the Annual Report for Federal Fiscal Year 2007 for the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS). ORS is charged with empowering Rhode Islanders with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence and full integration into society. Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Disability Determination Services provide a myriad of resources and services which enhance the quality of life for Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

Younger individuals with disabilities and their families work with vocational rehabilitation counselors in order to make that important transition from school to post-secondary education and careers. The business and labor community depend on ORS for trained, job-ready applicants. Rhode Islanders applying for social security disability benefits get accurate and timely decisions, and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides for individuals who have a visual impairment a comprehensive array of personalized services.

In FFY 2007 6,889 persons with disabilities were provided vocational rehabilitation, training and employment services. The Disability Determination Services adjudicated 12,042 claims for social security disability benefits.

We are proud of the partnerships that our staff has developed with our citizen advisory councils, our customers and the community, which has contributed so much to the quality of life for individuals with disabilities in Rhode Island.

*Gary D. Alexander, Director - DHS*

## Message from the Administrator

On behalf of the Office of Rehabilitation Services, I am pleased to present to you the 2007 Annual Report. The purpose of the Office of Rehabilitation Services is to provide customized and comprehensive services to individuals with disabilities that will maximize their quality of life, self reliance, and economic independence in the community.

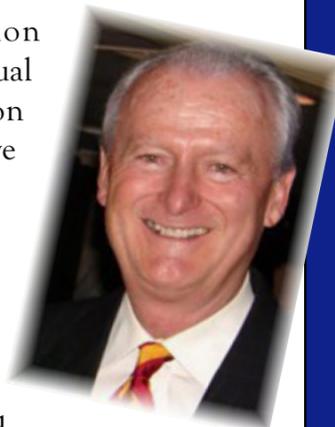
We have included success stories that reflect the diversity of our customers and their needs. We want to describe the partnership between our staff and our customers that makes rehabilitation work.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program increases revenue at all levels of government and decreases the burden of income maintenance programs. As persons with disabilities achieve an employment outcome, they become tax-paying citizens and more than pay back the cost of the program.

In 2007, ORS assisted 745 individuals with disabilities to obtain competitive employment. With an emphasis on serving individuals with the most significant disabilities, ORS is making a real difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families. The accomplishments outlined in this annual report reflect favorably on the efforts of the staff who, by hard work and commitment, have continued a long tradition of serving Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

We are also indebted to the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council, Statewide Independent Living Council, Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind & Visually Impaired, State Committee of Blind Vendors, and Rhode Island Council on Assistive Technology, for their partnership and help in maximizing the potential of persons with disabilities. I also extend my appreciation to our hard-working and capable staff along with our many public and private partners.

*Raymond A. Carroll, Administrator - ORS*



## **Message from the State Rehabilitation Council Chair**



The Rhode Island Rehabilitation Council is proud to share the 2007 Annual Report with all of our constituents. This was another impressive year of accomplishments for the vocational rehabilitation program and our state Council. The partnership of the Office of Rehabilitation Services and the Rhode Island Rehabilitation Council continues to grow and foster many opportunities for Rhode Islanders with disabilities in entering the workforce and living independently.

The Council has facilitated its work through a strategic planning and goal setting process for over a year. This has contributed to our ability to account for our activities in measurable terms and focus on the delivery of services to customers of the agency. The results of this process are evident in the work of our committees, which appear in the committee reports beginning on page 9.

This year the Council moved to merge the Quality Assurance Committee with the State Plan & Policy Committee in order to improve the connection between qualitative results for the customers of the agency and the plans to move the agency forward. The timing of this will be critical as we prepare for a comprehensive needs assessment in 2008.

The Council has continued to work on the barriers to employment presented by transportation through the creation of an ad hoc committee in 2006-07. This work will continue in 2008 with the establishment of goals and targets for improvement.

Although we have entered a challenging fiscal environment, the Rhode Island Rehabilitation Council will continue to work with the agency in meeting the needs of Rhode Islanders with disabilities. The Council stands ready to advocate for the rehabilitation program that provides effective, results-oriented services for Rhode Islanders. Please join us for a Council meeting. They are open to the public and information is available on the website, [www.ors.ri.gov](http://www.ors.ri.gov).

*J. David Sienko, Chair*



## State Rehabilitation Council Accomplishments

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During 2007 the State Rehabilitation Council assisted the Office of Rehabilitation Services to achieve its mission. Some of the accomplishments and activities were:

- Participated in the development of the ORS strategic plan and the ORS State Plan
- Advised ORS on policies and procedures
- Policy and State Plan Committee contributed in revising six and creating two ORS policies
- Reviewed the Agency's 2007 accomplishments on the RSA Standards and Indicators

## State Rehabilitation Council Members

**Janice Belasco** is a consumer representative who has completed her second term on the Council. She has been nominated to serve her third term on the Council. Janice is an active member of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee.

**Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett** works for the Department of Health, Office of Special Health Care Needs Disability & Health Program. As a consumer representative, she is serving her first term on the Council and is a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee.

**Rocco Bruno** is the Manager of the Provider Audit & Reimbursement Department for the Medicare Program in the State of Rhode Island. He is serving his first term and is a member of the Nominating and Leadership Committee.

**Raymond Carroll** is an Ex-Officio member of the State Rehabilitation Council. Ray is the Administrator of the Office of Rehabilitation Services, however, he will be retiring from the Office of Rehabilitation Services as of December, 2007.

**Richard Costa** is a blind consumer and a new member to the Council. He will serve as our liaison to the Statewide Independent Living Council. He is currently a student at the University of Rhode Island, a member of the National Federation of the Blind, and an advocate for the blind and visually impaired. He is a member of the By-laws Committee.

**Linda Deschenes** is a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and a representative of the Office of Rehabilitation Services on the Council. She is serving on the Employment Committee.

**Domenic DiOrio**, an educator and consultant, represents the business community. Mr. DiOrio has been an active and contributing member of the Council for the past four years. Currently he is in his second term. He serves as Chair of the Nomination and Leadership Committee and is also Vice Chair of the Employment Committee. He often represents the Council Membership at regional conferences.

**Susan Donovan** has been a member on the Council since 2004 and is our representative from the state Parent Training and Information Center (PTIC). Sue is a parent of a child with special needs and works as the Transition Program Manager at the RI Parent Information Network. Sue is currently serving as the Chair of the Employment Committee.

**Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor** is a physician by training and a vendor for ORS (Vocational Education). She is the Executive Director of the International School for Health Careers. She is serving her first term on the Council and is a member of the Employment Committee and the Nominations and Leadership Committee.

**Dr. Judith Drew** has a Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Services from The Ohio State University. She has been teaching Master's level courses in rehabilitation counseling since 1990 at various academic institutions. She has had a private practice specializing in vocational expert testimony, assessment and career counseling for the past sixteen years. Previously, she has been a disability case manager for Traveler's Insurance Co., and ran a vocational program for people with chronic mental illness. Dr. Drew presently serves on the RI Governor's Commission for People with Disabilities where she is the liaison for the RI Business Leadership Network, and on the executive committee. She is also the Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council's Transportation Committee.

**Joseph Ferreira** is a consumer and is in his second term on the Council. He is the Vice-chair of the Council. He is also the Chairperson for the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee.

**Steven Florio** is a Deaf consumer and an advocate concerning Deaf and Hard of Hearing. He is in his first term on the Council and is a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee.

**Jeanne Giroux** is a Durable Medical Equipment Representative with a background in Finance. A former client of ORS, she serves on the Employment Committee.

**Michael Hazard** is a well-known outstanding basketball player in Rhode Island. He attended the University of Nova Scotia on scholarship. Michael is especially noted for his volunteer work with children in sports at the YMCA in Providence, the City of Providence Youth Program, and the University of Rhode Island summer camps. He is a new member of the Council and is currently seated on the Nominations and Leadership Committee.

**Margaret Hoye** has been active on a number of Council terms since its inception. This year she is serving on the Nominations and Leadership Committee and the By-Laws Committee. Margaret is an advocate for independent living and elderly Americans. After taking a mandatory leave she is starting another new term.

**Anne LeClerc** is a planner with the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority. Currently in her first term, she is serving on the Transportation Committee.

**Gary J. Levine** is an attorney in private practice with a focus on representing individuals with disabilities. He was appointed to the State Rehabilitation Council in 2006 and is a member of State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee.

**Silvermoon Mars** is a Narragansett Indian Tribal Member and the program manager for the MPTN Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program. She is a new member and will be serving on the Employment Committee.

**Lucille Massemينو** is a RN and nursing home administrator. She is president of Davenport Associates LTD., manager of the continuum of care, Charlesgate Apartments, assisted living and nursing home. She is in her first term on the Council and is a member of the Nominations and Leadership Committee.

**Lorna C. Ricci** is the Executive Director of the Ocean State Center for Independent Living. Lorna has a visual impairment and is serving in her first three-year term. She also serves on several various councils and boards.

**Juan Troncoso** is a new member on the Council and works as an Auditor Assistant. He is a Co-Founder and Ex-President of Quisqueya in Action, Inc. The organization promotes the Dominican heritage, provides college awareness to high school students and empowers youth to become community leaders. Juan is joining the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee.

**J. David Sienko** is a representative from special education and just completed his first term on the Council. He is the current Chairperson of the Council. He chairs the Executive Committee and serves on the State Plan, Policy & Quality Assurance Committee.

**Vincent Rossi** is the statewide Disability Program Navigator with the Department of Labor & Training. He serves on the Transportation Committee and is in his second year.

**Catherine Sansonetti** is a Staff Attorney at the Rhode Island Disability Law Center and is the current representative from the Client Assistance Program. She serves as Secretary for the Executive Committee off the Council and also participates on the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee and the Transportation Committee.

**Mary Wambach** is a new Council Member who hopes to serve with both the Leadership and the Employment Committees. She is deaf, works full time at Corliss Institute, and serves on several other state councils and groups.

**Herb Weiss** is the Economic and Cultural Affairs Officer for the City of Pawtucket. In this position he serves as an advocate to local businesses, art groups and artists. As a journalist, he has covered the fields of aging, health care and medicine for over twenty-seven years with his articles appearing in local, state and national publications. He sits on the Employment Committee.

## Committees

### Employment Committee

This critical committee is charged with increasing employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities through employer partnerships.

The Employment Committee has examined the Comprehensive Needs Assessment in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act. This assessment research, in conjunction with our State Performance Plan, has been the catalyst for the strategic planning and the development of our Marketing Plan. The Marketing Plan includes furthering outreach to the Rhode Island Business community through all the Chamber of Commerces and the RI Business Leadership Network. Additionally, an article slated for a press release, detailing the benefits of the Office of Rehabilitation Services (VR Agency) as a qualified labor resource, is being finalized, along with a strategy for its dissemination. Representatives from the Greater Providence Chamber, our committee, and the VR Agency's Business Development Liaison, met to plan strategies that support the VR Agency in the key area of Job Development.

The Employment Committee also participated in the Council's Strategic Planning Retreat with the Office of Rehabilitation Services. At that time, details of the Marketing Plan and our long-term goals were identified as well as assistive linkages to other committees on the Council; expanding outreach and education efforts, while increasing RI business input.

I respectfully submit our report on behalf of my Vice-chair, Dominic DiOrio, and the entire Employment Committee. I also want to thank my committee for influencing positive ideas and giving quality time in all their work towards initiating, researching, strategizing our plans, and for achieving our goals this past year.

Respectfully Submitted, Susan Donovan, Chair

### **Nominating and Leadership Development Committee**

This key committee is charged with developing leadership that is fully committed to the Council's Mission, proactive in empowering consumers with disabilities, strategic in its thinking, and representing the rich diversity of Rhode Island's populations; recruitment of new members, including assessment of population sectors, representation, and skills needed to fill gaps.

In continuance of last year's Strategic Planning Initiative, the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee has successfully addressed the guidelines for the Federal Legislations as well as the needs of the Office of Rehabilitation Services to meet and expand upon the requirements for the composition of our membership. For the next calendar year, the committee has recommended six new members to be seated on the Council, all representing minority and disabled populations in our state. We have also welcomed back two former members who took a mandatory one-year break, and re-appointed one seated member to a second term.

The Nominating and Leadership Development Committee has successfully been an influencer with increasing the membership and thus diversifying viewpoints on the Council, and working with our sister committees in helping achieve their goals and objectives. We are entering our second phase of the Strategic Planning Initiative - Goal Development. The committee plans to seek even greater business and industry representation on the Council; actuate our Guest Speaker Program in order to better educate the membership on specific issues dealing with Vocational Rehabilitation programs operating in our state, especially those geared towards the goal of employment; and to explore the feasibility of the development of a flow chart of the state-wide delivery services for the disabled population.

I respectfully submit our report on behalf of my Co-chair, Lucille Massemino, and the entire Nominating and Leadership Development Committee. I also wish to offer my sincere thanks to the committee for their energetic team spirit and hard work.

**Respectfully Submitted, Domenic DiOrio Jr., Co-chair**

**State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee**

The State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee is charged with advising the agency about its plans and policies in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act. The committee also is concerned with the quality of services delivered to ORS consumers. In consultation with both ORS and the entire council, the committee participated in the Strategic Planning Initiative to identify action steps and timelines for accomplishment of committee-specific tasks.

In the past year, a timeline was developed for the review of the State Plan. As the State Plan guides the work of ORS for each year, it is a critical document that requires thoughtful feedback from the SRC. A designated ORS staff person has been assigned to help the committee with new goals for the upcoming year. In addition, last year the committee examined eight (8) proposed agency policy revisions and gave feedback and advice to the agency about the proposed changes as well as about the impact the changes might have on consumers.

Next year, the State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee will be involved in the design and implementation of a State-wide Needs Assessment to be used as a tool to later review consumer satisfaction with the agency. We will further work with ORS to develop a Quality Assurance Plan based on our review of the Rehabilitation Services Administration's most recent 107 Monitoring report which identifies ORS' strengths and weaknesses.

On behalf of the entire State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee, I submit our report. I also thank my committee members for their dedication and hard work.

**Respectfully Submitted, Joseph Ferreira, Chair**

**Transportation Committee**

The transportation committee is a newly organized, short-term sub-committee of the State Rehabilitation Council. Our mission is to research and identify barriers to the use of public transportation for citizens with disabilities in the State of Rhode Island.

Over the past year we have invested our time in first understanding the state of transportation alternatives in Rhode Island. With that behind us, although we can never be quite sure we understand all the initiatives, we have created a transportation survey. This survey will be disseminated to non-profit agencies, senior centers, community action programs and assisted living facilities across the state. The goal of the survey is to identify barriers to transportation access and to learn what transportation resources are being provided to citizens with disabilities from the organizations and non-profits that have been identified. Once the data is collected, it will be analyzed and utilized to provide the SRC and RIPTA with feedback on what our major barriers are, and what transportation resources may be available through private collaboration that could be allocated more efficiently.

In 2008 it is our goal to produce a report that may offer suggestions for changes and economies that might be made to the transit system that may meet the transportation needs of more Rhode Island citizens with disabilities. Other transportation activities may also arise out of that report.

On behalf of the entire Transportation Committee, I submit our report. I also thank my committee members for their dedication and hard work.

**Respectfully Submitted, Dr. Judith Drew, Chair**

## Program Highlights

Federal Fiscal Year 2007  
October 1, 2006 - September 30, 2007

### 745 individuals were successfully employed

- 2,239 individuals applied for vocational rehabilitation services.
- 6,889 individuals with disabilities were provided vocational rehabilitation services.
- 1,504 individuals worked with a vocational rehabilitation counselor to develop a new Individualized Plan for Employment [IPE].
- 4,196 individuals received Counseling and Guidance Services from vocational rehabilitation counselors.
- 2,693 individuals received services purchased from vendors. Services ranged from evaluations, medical and psychological therapies, training, personal assistant services, job placement and training.
- 460 individuals received rehabilitation technology services to assist them to prepare for and to enter employment.
- 1,685 individuals received information from Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) Resource Centers about assistive technology and funding options.
- 1,926 individuals received AT training, demonstration, loans or assistance with recycled AT devices.

- 426 individuals were provided specialized equipment through ATEL (Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan program)
- 2,252 youth with disabilities from 14-21 have been provided transition services by 19 VR counselors
- 19 vending facilities were supported by the Business Enterprises Program (BEP) at Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.
- 342 children, including 92 children age birth through three years old, received services from the Social Service unit.
- 19,400 children were screened by the Vision Screening Program resulting in 578 children receiving necessary follow-up care thus reducing or eliminating the early impact of poor visual function.
- 659 elderly individuals who are blind or visually impaired received services from the Independent Living for Older Blind Program: 462 received low vision aids, 256 received rehabilitation teaching, 132 received mobility services and 489 received service coordination. 98.3% of this group reported that they feel more confident in their independent living, and 16.7% indicated they had considered nursing home placement prior to services, but were able to remain in their own homes.
- 40 children who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled attend Camp Mauchatea.



## What We Do...

The Vocational Rehabilitation process consists of assisting an individual with a disability to assess his/her vocational abilities and to identify, coordinate and provide services needed to realize employment. The partnership between each individual with a disability and their vocational rehabilitation counselor is a key component in the vocational rehabilitation process. The individual and his/her vocational rehabilitation counselor work together to develop an Employment Plan which will assist them to reach employment.

Vocational rehabilitation services that may be included in an Employment Plan are:

- Counseling and Guidance to help plan vocational goals and services
- Transition Services from School to Career
- Rehabilitation Technology Services
- Assistive Technology Services
- Diagnostic Evaluations
- College or Vocational Training
- Job Development and Placement Services
- Vehicle Modifications
- Housing Modifications
- Post-Employment Services
- Other Goods & Services
- Job Training & Supports

## Deaf Services...

The Office of Rehabilitation Services helps individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing obtain services to meet their needs, provides counseling and guidance to help plan vocational goals and services, and assists the individual to obtain employment. ORS serves as a resource to professionals, state agencies, community organizations, and the public providing information related to employment, training and accommodations for persons who have a hearing loss.

### **Independent Living Services...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services purchases assessments and independent living services from the two Independent Living Centers, PARI and OSCIL, as part of preparing individuals with significant disabilities for employment.

### **The Rhode Island Learning Disabilities Project ...**

The LD Project is a unique Department of Human Services intra-agency initiative between the Office of Rehabilitation Services and the Family Independence Program (FIP). This collaborative relationship was created to help identify parents on cash assistance with learning disabilities, and to provide the necessary accommodations and vocational training programs in order for individuals to become independent and economically self-sufficient. During 2007, the nationally-recognized LD Project served 60 individuals and assisted 14 individuals with learning disabilities to reach their employment goals.

### **Supported Employment...**

Supported employment assists individuals with the most significant disabilities, who need ongoing supports, to choose, find and keep competitive employment in community integrated settings. After initial services by ORS, long-term funding is provided through other funding sources.

### **Transition...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services has a strong commitment to assist students with disabilities with transition planning to adult life. ORS counselors visit all school districts and work with families and students to plan services to help students reach career goals. ORS counselors provide technical assistance and information to school systems and work in partnership with the 5 Regional Educational Collaboratives and 4 Transition Academies to improve transition planning.

### **Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan (ATEL) Program...**

The ATEL Program loans telephone equipment to residents of the State of Rhode Island who have hearing, speech, or neuromuscular (unable to dial or hold a receiver) impairments and have a signed certificate of disability. Equipment is issued on a first-come, first-serve basis.

### **Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP)**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services is the lead agency for the Rhode Island Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP). ATAP is a statewide program funded under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, which works to reduce or eliminate barriers that impede access to, and funding for, assistive technology devices and services for individuals with disabilities of all ages.

### **Home Modification Program...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services administers federal and state independent living funds which provide home accessibility and adaptive equipment for individuals who are significantly disabled, to enable them to meet independent living goals in their homes and communities.

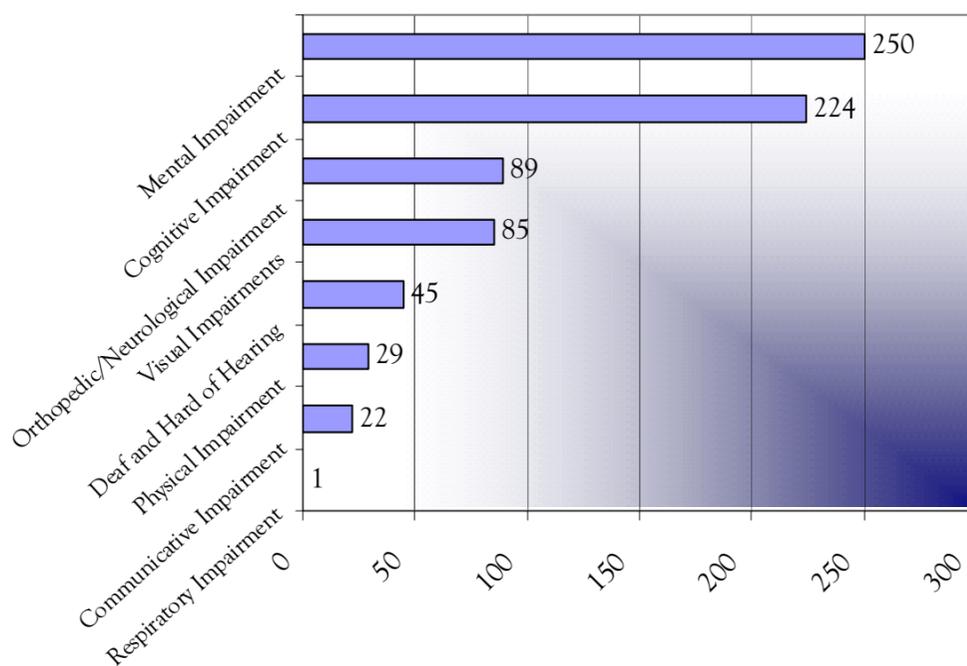
### **State PCA Program...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services contracts with PARI Independent Living Center to be the fiscal agent for the State Personal Care Assistance program for individuals who are not eligible for Medicaid-funded waivers. Through this program individuals are able to continue living in the community rather than a nursing home.

## Work Incentive Planning & Assistance (WIPA) on the Rhode to Independence...

WIPA is a new cooperative agreement with the Social Security Administration and the Office of Rehabilitation Services. The goal of the project is to assist SSA beneficiaries with disabilities to succeed in their efforts to obtain or return to work. The project will emphasize return to work efforts by providing accurate information regarding work incentives planning, assistance and outreach services that are designed to encourage beneficiaries with disabilities to seek, maintain and regain employment.

Primary Disability of 745  
Persons Successfully Employed



Vocational Rehabilitation

## Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI)

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) offers a wide array of services to eligible individuals who are blind or visually impaired through its Vocational Rehabilitation Unit, Business Enterprises Program, and Social Services Program. The various services offered by these programs are designed to help individuals of all ages achieve independence at home, in the community, and in the workplace.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Program...** is a Federal/State Program created to assist people who are blind or visually impaired to obtain or maintain employment. Services provided include evaluation, orientation, mobility training, rehabilitation technology, guidance and counseling, career assessment, educational planning, vocational training, provision of adaptive equipment, job development, placement, and follow-up services.

**Business Enterprises Program...** is a Federal/State Program which establishes vending facilities in state, federal or private buildings for operation by persons who are legally blind. Licensed blind vendors operate vending facilities at 21 locations throughout the state and are assigned to these locations on the basis of their seniority within the program. Types of facilities range from small snack bars serving light snacks and beverages to larger food-service sites serving hot and cold entrees prepared on-site. All operate under the name of "Coffee Plus".

**Newsline...** is a comprehensive newspaper reading service available to individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or print handicapped, that is accessible through the use of any touch-tone telephone. Individuals can access more than 200 newspapers and magazines, including The Providence Journal, The New York Times, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and the AARP Monthly Newsletter.

**Social Services Program...** Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired coordinates a federal comprehensive service program which focuses primarily on children from birth through age 14, elderly individuals, and individuals for whom a vocational goal is not feasible.

- **Children's Case Management Services** include family casework, coordination with Early Intervention Programs, educational guidance, summer camp for youth, arrangement of ophthalmological and low vision evaluations, and information and referral to appropriate community programs.

- **Vision Screening Program** through Saving Sight RI which utilizes an MTI photoscreening device to take pictures of the child's eye without the child having to read an eye chart. Screenings are done in day care centers, nursery schools, public schools and other community locations.

- **Independent Living for Older Blind Program** provides case management services, along with ancillary services for mobility, and orientation, rehabilitation teaching for skills training in activities of daily living, management of low vision, provisions of adaptive equipment, and information and referral to support groups and appropriate community services.

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#### In Memory of Gerald B. Shapiro



In February 2008 the Office of Rehabilitation Services lost one of our own in an unexpected tragedy. Jerry, as his family, friends, co-workers, and clients knew him passed away in a tragic fire in his home. He had worked for the State of Rhode Island at Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired as a Rehabilitation Counselor for 29 years where he had helped thousands of individuals with disabilities gain employment, and was anticipating his retirement in June 2008. Jerry was also a prominent member of Temple Emanu-El. Jerry will be missed by all who knew him.

## **Disability Determination Services**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services administers the office of Disability Determination Services (DDS) for the Social Security Administration (SSA). This unit determines the medical eligibility of Rhode Island residents, both children and adults, who have applied for benefits under the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) programs. Although fully federally funded, the DDS is a state agency which is responsible for obtaining the medical records and other information needed to determine whether the applicant meets the criteria for disability as defined by the SSA rules and regulations.

In 2005, the DDS officially began the process of converting from a paper-based system to a fully electronic model. Presently, the DDS has the capacity to process about 90% of its workload in an electronic format. The last subset of cases not currently amenable to electronic processing (Continuing Disability Reviews) will be able to be adjudicated electronically in the near future with the imminent upgrading of existing processing systems.

Beginning in 2006 and continuing through 2007, the Rhode Island DDS has been instrumental in advancing the electronic process to the next level as one of 6 states nationally to pilot a newly structured case adjudication system. This new model known as DSI (Disability Service Improvement) utilized the innovations available in the electronic process while streamlining other aspects of adjudication and review. As a pilot state, Rhode Island tested multiple manifestations of the model and gave critical input in determining which elements of DSI would move forward. The DSI paradigm continues to be modified. A number of components of the model demonstrated immediate success and are being implemented nationwide.

Other elements of process have been found to be inefficient and are undergoing further review before a decision is made on their integration into the program. The Rhode Island DDS will continue to play a prominent role in the coming months as the infrastructure for the future of the disability claims processing system is further developed.

## Disability Determination Services Accomplishments

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12,000	total cases were received by the Disability Determination Services
12,042	claims were successfully processed by the Disability Determination Services
9,205	initial claims were filed
829	continuing disabilities review cases, including 76 face-to-face hearings (hearing appeals)
10,281	Consultative Examinations were purchased
18,971	Medical Evidence of Record purchased
\$1,488,919	Total Medical Costs with a Total Budget of \$7,458,382
\$595.81	Cost per case

Production Per Work Year (PPWY) efficiency rate was **259.8**. The national rate was **248.9**. The performance accuracy rate for RI was **91.9%**. The net accuracy was **94.8%**. The regulatory standard is **90.4%**.

**Name:** Jed Barton  
**Occupation:** Direct Sales Representative  
**Employer:** Towerstream Broadband  
**Counselor:** Missy Koch

Edwin “Jed” Barton, IV is particularly well placed in his job as a Direct Sales Representative at Towerstream Broadband, Middletown, RI. Towerstream is a leading fixed wireless broadband provider in the U.S. founded in 2000. Today the company has the largest pre-WiMAX deployment in the U.S. serving such markets as New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, the greater Boston, Providence and Newport, R.I.



Jed graduated with a B.S. in Communications from Emerson College in Boston, MA.

Previously, Jed exercised his talents recording voiceovers for community access promotions as well as working for the Barrington Police Department as a Dispatcher-411. Jed’s sales experience began as a Loan Officer and mortgage consultant. ORS/SBVI and Jed have worked together through high school transition into college and most recently into his move into a new industry, Broadband sales. Jed uses adaptive technology, including JAWS for those PC users with little or no vision, a laptop and a MAC. Jed has worked with Bio/Nexus and is a proficient communicator using adaptive technologies, including a Treker GPS system. If one travels with Jed, either by foot, auto or by sea, he and the satellites will let you know where you are and how to get to the next destination.

**Name:** Fernanda Lambert  
**Occupation:** Stock Clerk  
**Employer:** AJ Wrights  
**Counselor:** Jeannie Desmarais-Valdez



Fernanda Lambert is now happily employed at AJ Wrights. She has come a long way despite several obstacles and crisis. She came to the Office of Rehabilitation Services in July 2005 requesting assistance with employment. She was quiet and despite some communication and language barriers, she was able to express herself through the use of American Sign Language (ASL), gestures, writing, and drawings. Fernanda has excellent work ethics and demonstrated abilities to finish her job tasks promptly. She was not sure exactly what she wanted to do, however through vocational exploration & evaluation, she decided on stock clerk as a vocational goal. The evaluation at AJ Wrights resulted in a job offer. Before she could start her job, her husband passed away suddenly. She had become a single mother. She had relied on her husband for so long now that she was suddenly on her own.

*“I can and I did it!”*

Through collaborative team efforts from ORS, Goodwill, DEAF, Inc., Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (MCDHH), and of course Fernanda herself with her family supports, ORS was able to provide equipment, independent living skills training, housing assistance, transportation, and other services. She also receives counseling to help her cope and grieve over her loss. We resumed vocational services and not surprisingly, she was offered a job once again at AJ Wrights, this time at a different location, one that is nearest her home. She has continued to demonstrate excellent work habits and is a hard worker. She has wonderful personality, always smiling and is well-liked by other staff. She has maintained her job for over a year now.

She has persevered through many obstacles and although it was not easy at first, she has embraced her newfound independence so that she can say “I can and I did it!”.

Success Stories

**Name:** Frank Wiley  
**Occupation:** Janitorial  
**Employer:** Davol Fitness and Spa  
**Counselor:** Karen LeBeau

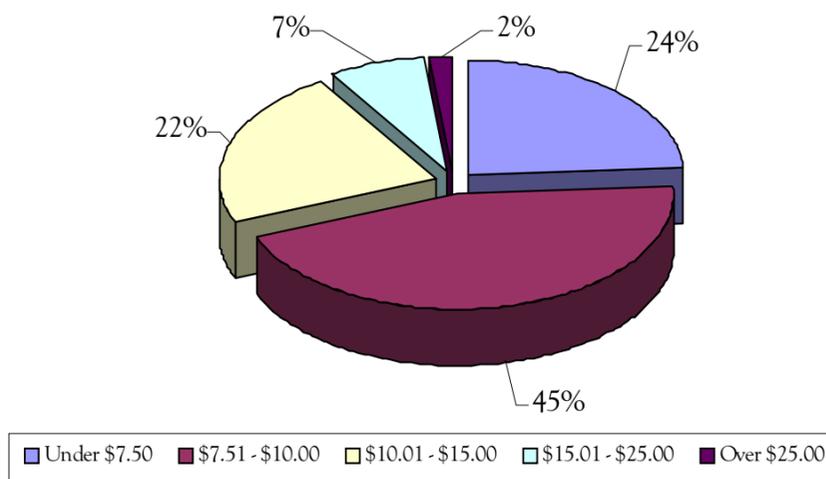


Frank Wiley is a 59-year old customer who was originally homeless and had no income when he came to ORS. He came to an ORS-sponsored Interviewing Skills Workshop, as well as the Job Club. ORS referred him back to Crossroads RI for assistance with housing where they were able to provide him with an apartment in Traveler's Aid Housing. ORS assisted him with developing his resume, cover and thank you letters. ORS also assisted him with completing on-line applications and job development. ORS also paid for other items to assist him so that he would be well-presented for job interviews.

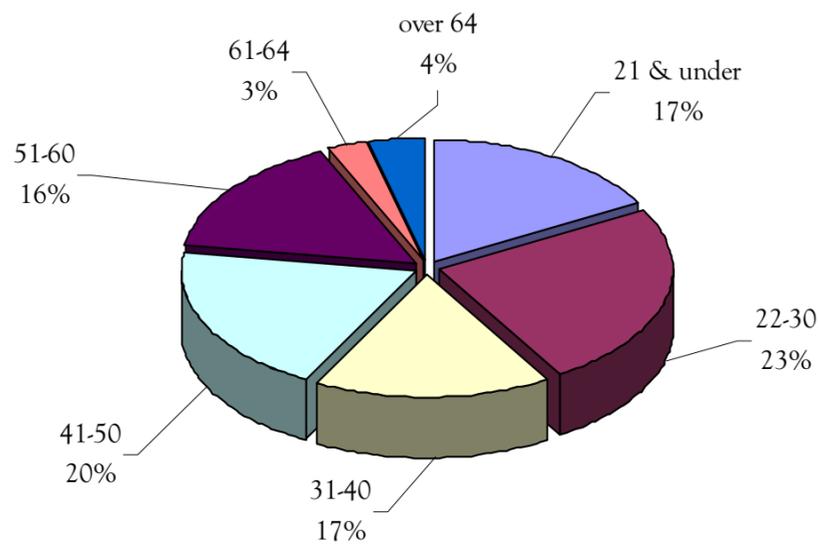
Since he was still looking for work, ORS referred him to Pam Tonry of Career Connections for job placement. The ORS Counselor was also working collaboratively with Traveler's Aid Housing case manager, Melissa Parham, who made suggestions that enabled Frank to maintain a schedule and keep his appointments. Ms. Tonry of Career Connections spoke to the manager at Davol Fitness & Spa and inquired if he would consider On-the-Job Training for Frank for a 3-month period, since she believed that he would be able to learn the job duties within that time frame. The owner of Davol Fitness & Spa agreed, and was pleased with Frank's job performance. Frank is also very happy with his job, and has been working there for over 90 days.

### Hourly Income of 745 Persons Successfully Employed\*

\* Does not include homemakers



### Age Groups of 745 Persons Successfully Employed



Success Stories

## Building a Better Partnership in the Community

**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)** is a citizen-advisory body appointed by the Governor. The Council is consumer-controlled in that a majority of its members are individuals with disabilities and not employed by the State VR Agency. Members represent agencies, organizations and other councils of and for individuals with disabilities in Rhode Island. The SRC, in conjunction with the VR agency, jointly conduct the comprehensive statewide needs assessment of individuals with disabilities in Rhode Island, develop and agree to the state's annual goals and priorities in carrying out the VR program, and annually evaluate the state's performance relative to its goals and conducts customer satisfaction surveys. Together the SRC and the state VR agency partner to assure that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely and effective VR services.

**Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired** is an advisory council appointed by the Governor that advises the SBVI regarding the programs provided by that agency; works collaboratively with the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council; and provides oversight responsibility to the Independent Living Program for the Elderly Blind.

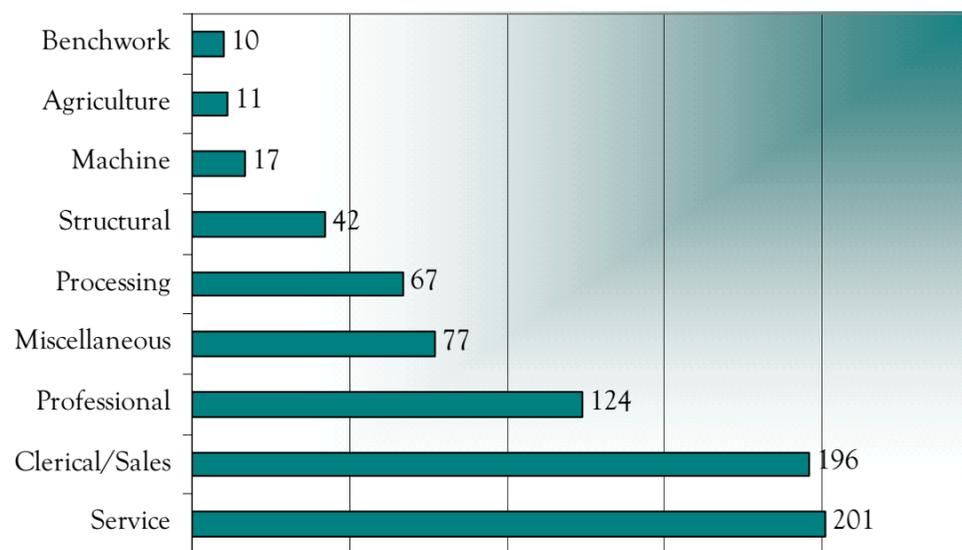
**RI Council on Assistive Technology (RICAT)** is the advisory body to the RI Assistive Technology program ATAP - the Assistive Technology Access Partnership - funded through the AT Act. RICAT is actively involved in legislative and other initiatives that will increase the access to assistive technology for Rhode Islanders.

**RI Statewide Independent Living Council (RISILC)** jointly develops and submits, in conjunction with the ORS, the State Plan for Independent Living Services and Centers for Independent Living. They also monitor, review and evaluate the implementation of the State Plan.

**State Committee of Blind Vendors** is composed of representatives elected from among all licensed blind vendors within the state. The Committee participates actively in carrying out all of the program management responsibilities.

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### Occupations of 745 Persons Successfully Employed



## Facts at a Glance

Consumers with disabilities who went to work ..... 745  
Hourly wage range ..... \$7.40 - \$82.85  
Total earnings of these employees in the  
first year ..... \$10,768,888  
Weekly salary range ..... \$74.00 - \$3,150.00  
Individuals with disabilities who received  
VR services ..... 6,889  
Rhode Islanders who applied for VR services ..... 2,239  
Individuals who worked with their VR counselor  
to develop an IPE ..... 1,504  
Individuals who were found eligible for VR  
services ..... 2,037  
For every dollar spent on vocational rehabilitation, \$5.00 is  
returned in taxes  
For every dollar spent on VR, \$14 to \$18 is returned to the  
economy

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## National Statistics

Number of Americans with disabilities ..... 54 million  
Americans with disabilities of working age  
that are not employed ..... 70%  
Each individual received VR services for .....  
..... approximately 2-5 years  
In FFY 2006, individuals with disabilities that  
went to work ..... 205,791  
Wages after completing first year of work ..... \$3.6 billion

- Federal taxes paid by these individuals - \$331 million
- State income taxes paid by these individuals - \$97 million
- Social Security and Medicare taxes paid by these  
individuals - \$537 million
- Time before cost of VR services paid back - 2 to 4 years

## Standards and Performance Indicators as of 9/30/07

### Standard 1 Employment Outcomes

**Indicator 1.1 - Number of Employment Outcomes**

Federal Standard Equal to or greater than prior year

FY 2001	90 fewer
FY 2002	32 greater
FY 2003	34 greater
FY 2004	30 greater
FY 2005	65 greater
FY 2006	36 greater
FY 2007	9 greater

**Indicator 1.2 - Standard/Indicator - Employed vs those closed unsuccessfully after plan (Rehabilitation rate)**

Federal Standard	55.8%
FY 2001	80.09%
FY 2002	77.58%
FY 2003	59.31%
FY 2004	58.31%
FY 2005	64.28%
FY 2006	59.74%
FY 2007	59.89%

**Indicator 1.3 - Competitively Employed (minimum wage or higher)**

Federal Standard	72.6%
FY 2001	62.88%
FY 2002	89.67%
FY 2003	94.88%
FY 2004	90.87%
FY 2005	90.57%
FY 2006	91.44%
FY 2007	90.47%

**Indicator 1.4 - Competitively Employed (minimum wage or higher) who have a Significant Disability**

Federal Standard	62.40%
FY 2001	97.64%
FY 2002	98.24%
FY 2003	99.48%
FY 2004	100.00%
FY 2005	100.00%
FY 2006	100.00%
FY 2007	100.00%

**Indicator 1.5 - Earnings Ratio of Minimum Wage or higher for ORS vs. State Average**

Federal Standard	Ratio of .52
FY 2001	.61
FY 2002	.55
FY 2003	.56
FY 2004	.555
FY 2005	.60
FY 2006	.55
FY 2007	.57

**Indicator 1.6 - Self-Support (report own income at closure vs. own income at application) Federal Standard 53% mathematical difference**

FY 2001	41.43%
FY 2002	50.59%
FY 2003	59.23%
FY 2004	59.54%
FY 2005	58.83%
FY 2006	62.41%
FY 2007	61.57%

**Standard 2 - Minority Ratio Equal Access to Services**

Federal Standard Ratio of .80 for n=100+

FY 2001	.73	FY 2003	.86	FY 2005	.93	FY 2007	.87
FY 2002	.87	FY 2004	.91	FY 2006	.94		





DHS does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, age, religion or sex in acceptance for or provision of services, employment or treatment in its educational and other programs and activities.

For further information about this policy, contact:  
the Community Relations Liaison Office, (401) 462-2130  
or TDD (hearing impaired) (401) 462-6239.



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Office of Rehabilitation Services  
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[www.ors.ri.gov](http://www.ors.ri.gov)

*"Helping individuals with disabilities to  
choose, find and keep employment"*

Available in alternate formats by  
calling 401.421.7005 ext. 318.