Rhode Island
Department of Human Services
Office of Rehabilitation Services

And the

State Rehabilitation Council

2008
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.

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is my pleasure to provide you with the Annual Report for Federal Fiscal Year 2008 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 2008 6,736 persons with disabilities were provided vocational rehabilitation, training and employment services. The Disability Determination Services adjudicated 12,387 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

MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

On behalf of the Office of Rehabilitation Services, I am pleased to present to you the 2008 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 2008, ORS assisted 750 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.

Stephen J. Brunero, Acting Administrator

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL CHAIR

The Rhode Island Rehabilitation Council is proud to share the 2008 Annual Report. This year has emerged as one of the more challenging in recent memory, yet we continue to be pleased with the results achieved by the Council and the vocational rehabilitation program. Budget shortfalls this year have threatened the rehabilitation programs ability to maintain the high quality of service and performance outcomes we have grown to expect in Rhode Island. In these trying times, the relationship between the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) and the Rehabilitation Council have grown and become stronger. In challenging times, we often come together and emerge with a stronger relationship. I believe this has been the case this year.

The Council has continued to organize its work through strategic plans executed with the staff of the Agency. You will see evidence of this in the committee reports. Each committee has continued to work with the staff to design improvements in the areas critical to the success of the program.

The State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee have continued to improve the connection between qualitative results for the customers of the Agency and the plans to move the Agency forward. This work will continue in 2009 with the development of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

A significant role for the Council this year has been as advocate for the program. Budget cuts, expansion of the public assistance to work initiatives and an

unprecedented number of State Employee retirements have threatened the agencies' ability to maintain services. Although performance targets did not show a significant impact from these changes, most occurred late in the year and evidence may not emerge until next year's performance report.

The Council took a lead role in organizing the Governors Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the State Independent Living Council in a joint effort to promote the benefits of the vocational rehabilitation program. The Council was successful in getting these concerns shared in the Providence Business News, the States leading business news outlet, and utilized this coverage to carry the message to the States Congressional Delegates, the Governor, State Legislators, and Department Directors. The Council is satisfied that the message has been heard but more work will need to be done in 2009 to ensure the future stability of employment services for Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

Rhode Island has shared a rich and proud history of advocacy for its citizens with disabilities and as we continue to face a challenging fiscal environment, the Rhode Island State 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.

J. David Sienko

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.

Stephen Brunero is an Ex-Officio member of the State Rehabilitation Council. Steve is the Administrator of the Office of Rehabilitation Services.

Rocco Bruno is Manager of the Provider Audit and Reimbursement Department for the Medicare Program in the State of Rhode Island. He is serving his second term and is an active member of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee.

Edward T. Costa *passed away on September 5, 2008.* He was a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee for the past two years but that was a small part of Ed's dedication to the community. Over the years he served in a variety of capacities at the Rhode Island Department of Education and retired as the Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the Department. He was active in many professional organizations and served on several public and private corporate and nonprofit boards, commissions and advisory committees. He was the past president of the McAuley Ministries Board of Directors and a current trustee for the Cranston Public Libraries. Edward was decorated by the president of Portugal as Commander of the Order of Prince Henry the Navigator, the second highest Portuguese honor in recognition of his outstanding efforts for the Portuguese people in Rhode Island. We all mourn his passing and will miss him dearly.

Richard Costa is a blind consumer and a new member to the Council. He served 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 was a member of the By-laws Committee. Richard had to leave the Council this year to pursue his educational and employment goals. He will be missed, and we wish him all the best.

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, as an Educator and Consultant, he represents the business community. Domenic has been an active and contributing member of the Council for the past five years. Currently he is in his second term. He serves as Co-chair on both the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee and 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. This was Susan's last year with the Council. Her positive insightfulness and motivational attitude will be hard to replace, and she will be very much missed.

Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor is a Medical Doctor with a Master's degree in Public Administration from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. She is the Executive Director of the International School for Health Careers (a Vocational Education/Rehabilitation Program sensitive to the needs of the multilingual population of RI). She is a Field Supervisor for the Harvard University Divinity School. She is serving her first term on the Council and is a member of both the Employment Committee and the Nominating and Leadership Development 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. This was Joe's last year with the Council, and he shall be greatly missed, however, his tireless efforts for better employment and quality of life for all Rhode Islanders with disabilities will continue. He is currently working on developing a website for persons with disabilities.

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 Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. 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 currently seated on the Nominating and Leadership Development 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.

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 concentration in injury and disability law. He was appointed to the State Rehabilitation Council in 2006 and is a member of the State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee. In the coming year Gary will be working with the Employment 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 Massemino 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 entering her second term on the Council and is the Co-chair of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee.

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

Juan Troncoso is an Auditor Assistant for the Medicare Program in the State of Rhode Island. He is a Co-Founder and Ex-President of Quisqueya in Action, Inc. (Est. 1987). The organization promotes the Dominican heritage, provides college awareness to high school students and empowers youth to become community leaders. Juan is serving his first term on the Council with the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee.

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

Vincent Rossi is the Coordinator for the RI WORKS program and 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 serves on the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee. 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.

State Rehabiiltation Council Committee Reports

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 Commerce and the RI Business Leadership Network. Specifically, an article slated for press release, detailing the benefits of the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) as a qualified labor resource, has been finalized and disseminated. The article was written with the intention of updating it yearly in order to maintain ongoing promotion of the Agency. In addition, representatives from the Greater Providence Chamber, our committee, and ORS' Business Development Liaison, met to plan strategies that support the Agency in the key area of Job Development.

The Employment Committee has begun discussion about our long-term goals and the need to identify linkages in the community that would enhance the work of the Agency, in addition to educating committee and Council members about existing groups and support.

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
Employment Committee

Nominating and Leadership Development Committee

This committee is responsible to recruit and develop members for the Council that are committed to our mission to work with the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) to assure that all disabled Rhode Islanders are able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfying employment.

In keeping with our requirement to adhere to the Federal guidelines and by-laws for membership, our goal to continue with diversity of membership included recruiting nominees from three areas - minority, business and disabled/discouraged populations. We solicited potential membership candidate recommendations from within our own Council as well as the community. The committee interviewed and recommended four new candidates for appointment by the Governor for the upcoming year. In addition, the committee recommended the reappointment of eligible members whose terms were expiring.

Leadership development has been accomplished by continuing the Guest Speaker Program to better educate us on issues related to client needs and available resources. This project has helped us broaden our scope of vision and explore cooperative efforts to identify and serve those in need.

A goal remains to identify all related disability rehabilitation providers in the State and identify duplication of efforts and specialties. Consequently this has been delayed due to reorganization in the State caused by budget cuts. We are hopeful to proceed with this in the upcoming year.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the efforts and personal time of the volunteer members of the committee and our chairperson Domenic DiOrio who has dedicated most of his life to help disadvantaged populations.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lucille Massemino, Co-chair
Nominating and Leadership Development Committee

State Plan, Policy and QualityAssurance Committee

The State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee of the State Rehabilitation Council is charged with advising the Agency about its plans and policies in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act. The committee is also concerned with the quality of services delivered to the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) consumers by reviewing and analyzing customer satisfaction with ORS.

Each year, the Council identifies areas of concern and sets work goals. In 2008, as in other years, the committee consulted with the Council in the Strategic Planning Initiative to identify action steps and timelines for accomplishment of committee-specific tasks. In October 2007 the committee reviewed its prior goals of improving the timeline for review of the State Plan, to work with ORS to develop a Quality Assurance Plan, and the involvement of the design and implementation of the Statewide Needs Assessment survey. The committee also discussed changes to the State budget and its effect on service delivery.

The State Plan serves as a guide for ORS each year. The SRC provides feedback and public testimony regarding the draft plan on an annual basis. This year, as in prior years, the SRC State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance committee consulted with the SRC about its concerns. We expressed our view that ORS was increasingly burdened by State budget cuts and that additional resources are required in light of the new RI Works initiative. In addition to our comments on the State Plan, the committee generally reviews proposed policies and procedures of ORS to ensure compliance with federal law. This year, although there were no policy revisions, the Agency did raise a concern about continued service delivery to all eligible customers. In that regard, the committee has met briefly with ORS staff about whether it should or should not change its Order of Selection Criteria. Next year, these discussions will continue as needed. A designated ORS staff person continues to help the committee understand any proposed changes and is receptive to the committee's views about the impact such changes might have on ORS customers.

Last year, the State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee indicated a desire to be involved in the design and implementation of a Statewide Needs Assessment that will be used as a tool to review consumer satisfaction with the Agency. Although the SRC was not involved in the design and implementation of the Needs Assessment due to time constraints and logistical concerns, the committee did review with ORS the data from the initial surveys. ORS conducted a survey to vendors who provide services to

traditionally underserved and un-served populations. In FY 2009, ORS will consult with the committee to identify one new vendor with whom it can develop a new relationship.

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
State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee

Transportation Committee

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

The Council has continued to work on the barriers to employment presented by transportation through this committee. Over the past year we completed and distributed a transportation survey; the goal of the survey was 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. The committee is in the process of analyzing the results, which will be used to provide the SRC, the RIDE Program, and the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority 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 the coming year it is our goal to produce a report that may offer suggestions for changes and economies that might be made to the public and private transportation network that may meet the transportation needs of more Rhode Islanders 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 the committee members for their dedication and hard work.

Respectfully Submitted,
Judi Drew, Chair
Transportation Committee

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS - FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2008 OCTOBER 1, 2007 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2008

750 individuals were successfully employed

2,357 individuals applied for vocational rehabilitation services.

6,736 individuals with disabilities were provided vocational rehabilitation services.

1,511 individuals worked with a vocational rehabilitation counselor to develop a new Individualized Plan for Employment [IPE].

4,025 individuals received Counseling and Guidance Services from vocational rehabilitation counselors.

2,711 individuals received services purchased from vendors. Services ranged from evaluations, medical and psychological therapies, training, personal assistant services, job placement and training.

433 individuals received rehabilitation technology services to assist them to prepare for and to enter employment.

2,442 individuals received information from Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) Resource Centers about assistive technology and funding options.

4,047 individuals received AT training, demonstration, loans or assistance with recycled AT devices.

380 individuals were provided specialized equipment through ATEL (Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan program)

2,254 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. BEP sales totaled $1,568,934.

275 children, including **72** children age birth through three years old, received services from the Social Service unit.

16,450 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.

682 elderly individuals who are blind or visually impaired received services from the Independent Living for Older Blind Program: **470** received low vision aids, **225** received rehabilitation teaching, **122** received mobility services and **475** received service coordination. **99%** of this group reported that they feel more confident in their independent living, and **29%** indicated they had considered nursing home placement prior to services, but were able to remain in their own homes.

42 children who are blind, visually impaired and multi-disabled attended Camp Mauchatea.

Disability Determination Services

12,301 total cases were received by the Disability Determination Services

12,387 claims were successfully processed by the Disability Determination Services

9,477 initial claims were filed

1,027 continuing disabilities review cases, including 76 face-to-face hearings (appeals)

4,973 Consultative Examinations were purchased

10,383 Medical Evidence of Record purchased

$1,968,474 Total Medical Costs with a Total Budget of **$7,391,098**

$593.42 Cost per case

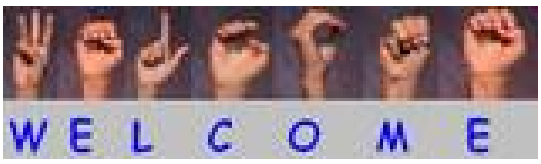
Production Per Work Year (PPWY) efficiency rate was **307.2.** The national rate was **265.7.** The performance accuracy rate for RI was **94.1%.** The net accuracy was **97.5%.** The regulatory standard is **90.4%.**

Vocational Rehabilitation program

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 2008, the nationally-recognized LD Project served **138** individuals and assisted 27 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.

Other Programs

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.

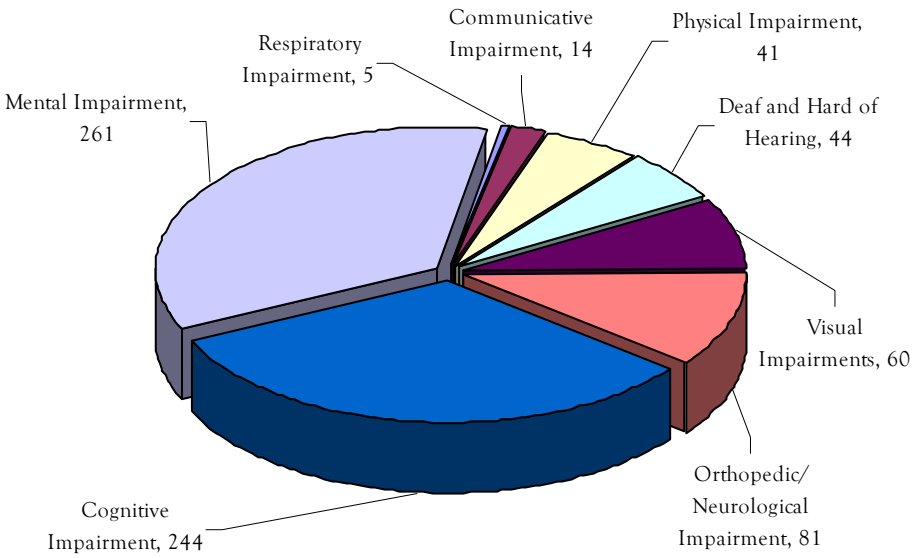
State PCA Program...

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.

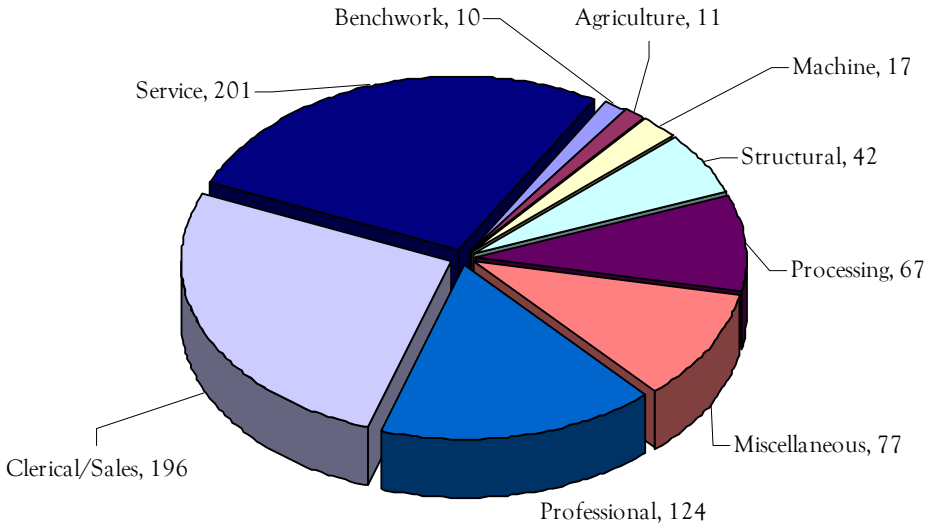
Work Incentive Planning & Assistance (WIPA) on the Rhode to Independence...

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 750 Persons Successfully Employed



Occupations of 750 Persons Successfully Employed



Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

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 19 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 opthalmological 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.

Disability Determination Services

Disability Determination Services (DDS) is the unit within the Office of Rehabilitation Services which 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. The DDS, although fully-federally funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA), is a state agency 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 better than 95% of its current workload in an electronic format. The last subset of cases not amenable to electronic processing (Continuing Disability Reviews) became part of the electronic adjudicative process in the fall of 2008 after the upgrading of existing processing systems was completed.

Beginning in 2006 and continuing through 2007, the Rhode Island DDS was 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 processes to identify and streamline the adjudication and review of cases with a high likelihood of being allowed. 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 did not survive in its original model but the finest aspects of the design were saved and incorporated nationally to improve the overall product utilized by disability examiners in all states.

The Rhode Island DDS continues to play an important role in determining the design of the adjudicative model for the Social Security disability program. This is accomplished by testing, evaluating, and incorporating the innovations which make the system more friendly and navigable for the disability applicant. In FY 2008 the RI DDS processed more than 12,000 disability application for residents of Rhode Island and achieved measures of accuracy and productivity which ranked in the top 10% in the nation.

Success Stories

Jimmy Spicolla has a long history with Rhode Island's Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Not limited to vocational rehabilitation services, Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) offers programs and services for all Rhode Islanders regardless of age. Prior to working with SBVI's vocational rehabilitation unit, Jimmy utilized supports in SBVI's Social Services Unit, including service coordination, information and referral, and family counseling.

When Jimmy turned 14, he transitioned to the SBVI's vocational rehabilitation unit exploring his long term educational and vocational goals. Throughout high school, SBVI worked in conjunction with Jimmy's local school department providing technical assistance, orientation and mobility instruction, and rehabilitation counseling services.

During the summer months Jimmy would attend Camp Mauchatea, a residential summer camp sponsored and organized by SBVI's Social Services Department to help children learn how to live independently and develop confidence.

As Jimmy prepared to graduate high school and transition to college, SBVI's Vocational Rehabilitation Unit assisted with orientation of the campus. He required specialized assistive technology to level the playing field with his sighted peers. Jimmy may have been eligible to receive tuition assistance from SBVI, though he chose to work two part-time jobs on campus instead.

Jimmy became very involved with the campus radio station, producing shows, and providing on-air talent. Jimmy majored in Communications and decided to pursue a career in radio and knew he had to work harder than his peers to break into such a competitive field. With SBVI's assistance, Jimmy rose to the occasion.

Now employed as the Assistant Director of Insight Radio, Jimmy is quick to acknowledge the importance of the services and support he received from SBVI. He utilizes the knowledge that he gained from the Social Service Unit and Vocational Units through SBVI and Office of Rehabilitation Services on a daily basis.

Success Stories

"Michael" was referred to ORS by netWORKri in January, 2008. His primary diagnosis was Type I Diabetes with peripheral circulatory disorders, foot cellulitis, osteomyelitis of the ankle and foot, and alcohol abuse. ORS worked very closely in collaboration with a representative from netWORKri who assisted with job development and placement services.

Since Michael was homeless, ORS and netWORKri spoke with RI Placement Coalition who assisted Michael in finding an apartment. The netWORKri representative also contacted McCauley House who assisted Michael with obtaining one month of free medications that were prescribed by his doctor, which were needed for Michael to maintain his job. When Michael began working, transportation issues arose which could have become a barrier to his successful employment. ORS provided various alternatives when he was unable to use his car. ORS provided a bus pass letter so that he could take the bus when needed. ORS also provided funds for required work-related clothes and shoes. Michael obtained a full-time security guard position as well as a 2nd part-time job in May, 2008.

LonTega Morris is a 26-year old woman with dysfluencies, a severe stuttering problem. She had begun receiving treatment at age 7, however, there was a lack of success in decreasing her stuttering.

LonTega received a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from Emmanuel College in 2003.

A portion of LonTega's job was to provide mentoring to students at community presentations. LonTega's job also required a lot of telephone and interpersonal communication. However, her condition worsened because of her anxiety over public speaking, and her stuttering increased with the additional stress on the job.

Her ORS counselor referred her to RI Hospital for a Fluency Evaluation. The therapist recommended the Speech Easy Device, which was purchased by ORS along with training to help her optimize its use. This device helped minimize her stuttering to an acceptable level in all circumstances which helps her to increase her confidence level on the job.

LonTega is currently employed as a Residential Coordinator in North Providence.

"**Anthony"** was referred to ORS by his physician while in Cardiac Rehab in January, 2008. Anthony's career was as an off-shore fisherman for 26 years. He suffered a heart attack while 250 miles off shore and lost consciousness. He was med-flighted to Hyannis after six hours at sea for treatment and returned to Rhode Island for stabilization and treatment.

When the ORS Counselor met 46-year old Anthony, he was depressed and shook by this totally unexpected experience. Anthony was physically in great shape and had no warning prior to this event. Anthony could not take the chance to go off-shore again. His ORS Counselor, Michaela Stannard, referred him to Kim Picard of WAVES Adeline LaPlante Center for a vocational evaluation and situational assessments. Anthony liked the staff at WAVES, and they wanted to help him with his impending career change, memory loss and depression.

Anthony went to Cardiac Rehab in South County and could go to WAVES without additional stress in his life. Anthony is the father of three small children and holds a large mortgage. His wife returned to work for income, and Anthony needed to be available to his young children while she worked.

Many vocational options were explored with Anthony. He went to a friend who owns a twine shop in Point Judith. He investigated employment at Superior Trawl that recently developed a haddock trawl which held a unique technology and net called "The Eliminator Trawl" for capturing only haddock and avoiding other fish that could not be retained. Anthony made and repaired nets and had his own unique knowledge as an experienced off-shore fisherman and has some very positive ideas for business.

Anthony's ORS counselor met with Anthony and Jonathan Knight of Superior Trawl to arrange an On-the-Job Training (OJT) within this company. Anthony was hired in Retail Sales of the new product. ORS provided on-the-job training funds, Quickbook training and a stipend for sales clothing.

Today the haddock trawl is internationally known and in great demand. Anthony runs the Retail Shop and keeps inventory through his new computer skills. He could have the opportunity to travel internationally in this sales position as well.

Anthony states that he is very grateful to ORS and WAVES for assisting him through the difficult time that he had while in rehabilitation. He does not feel stress in his employment at Superior Trawl and is grateful to his employer for assisting him in regaining a career that he loves to do.

Standards and Performance Indicators as of 9/30/08

Evaluation Standard 1–Employment Outcomes. VR assists eligible individuals to obtain, maintain or regain high quality employment.

Performance Indicator 1.1: The number of individuals who achieved an employment outcome in the current year must equal or exceed the number from the previous year. (Federal Standard - equal to or greater than prior year)

FY2003 - 34 greater	FY2006 - 36 greater
FY2004 - 30 greater	FY2007 - 9 greater
FY2005 - 65 greater	FY2008 - 5 greater

Performance Indicator 1.2: The percentage of individuals who exited the VR Program after receiving services who achieved an employment outcome. (Federal Standard - 55.8%)

FY2003 - 59.31%	FY2006 - 59.79%
FY2004 - 58.31%	FY2007 - 59.89%
FY2005 - 64.28%	FY2008 - 62.80%

Performance Indicator 1.3: The percentage of individuals who achieved an employment outcome and are earning at least the minimum wage. (Federal Standard - 72.6%)

FY2003 - 94.88%	FY2006 - 92.80%
FY2004 - 90.87%	FY2007 - 92.62%
FY2005 - 90.57%	FY2008 - 95.47%

Performance Indicator 1.4: Of those earning at least the minimum wage, the percentage who are individuals with significant disabilities. (Federal Standard - 62.40%)

FY2003 - 99.48%
FY2004 - 100.00%
FY2005 - 100.00%
FY2006 - 100.00%
FY2007 - 100.00%
FY2008 - 100.00%

Performance Indicator 1.5: The average hourly earnings of individuals earning at least the minimum wage, as a ratio to the average hourly earnings for all individuals in Rhode Island who are employed. (Federal Standard - Ratio of .52)

FY2003 - .560
FY2004 - .555
FY2005 - .539
FY2006 - .532
FY2007 - .530
FY2008 - .550

Performance Indicator 1.6: Of those earning at least the minimum wage, the difference between the percentage whose own income is their largest source of support when they exited the VR Program, and the percentage whose own income was their largest source of support at the time they applied for VR services. (Federal Standard - 53% mathematical difference)

FY2003 - 59.23%
FY2004 - 60.31%
FY2005 - 63.09%
FY2006 - 65.15%
FY2007 - 64.78%
FY2008 - 55.59%

Evaluation Standard 2 - Equal Access to Services. VR must ensure that individuals from minority backgrounds have equal access to VR services.

Performance Indicator 2.1: The services rate for individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all non-minorities with disabilities.

(Federal Standard - Ratio of .80 for n=100)

FY2003 - .860
FY2004 - .914
FY2005 - .906
FY2006 - .927
FY2007 - .854
FY2008 - .900

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.

DHS does not discriminate against any person on the basis of
race, color, national origina, 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 actitivities.

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

Rhode Island Department of Human Services

Office of Rehabilitation Services

40 Fountain Street ~ Providence, RI 02903

401.421.7005 (V) ~ 401.421.7016 (TDD)

401.272.8090 (Spanish)

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.