Rhode Island

Department of Human Services
Office of Rehabilitation Services
And the
State Rehabilitation Council

2009
ANNUAL REPORT

Donald L. Carcieri
Governor

Gary D. Alexander
Director

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 2009 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. ORS provides a comprehensive array of personalized services to Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

In FFY 2009 7,346 persons with disabilities were provided vocational rehabilitation, training and employment services. The Disability Determination Services adjudicated 14,506 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 2009 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 2009, ORS assisted 756 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, Administrator

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL CHAIR

The Rhode Island Rehabilitation Council is proud to share the 2009 Annual Report. Rhode Island has faced an economic crisis of significant proportions; the worst that most can remember. Over the past year the State has consistently placed in the top five states for highest unemployment rates. In spite of this challenge, the work of the State Rehabilitation Council and the Office of Rehabilitation Services has moved forward, and the Agency has continued to meet all of its performance targets including helping 756 Rhode Islanders secure employment.

The partnership between the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) and the Rehabilitation Council continues to strengthen and grow. The Council and ORS personnel have faced the challenges this year, with positive results, and continued to succeed because of this strong relationship.

Work of the Council continues to be organized around the priorities established in the State Plan through the Council's committee structure. ORS leadership is represented on each committee, enabling Council membership to better understand the demands on the Agency and provide support for the structures that allow ORS to be as effective as possible. The Council has successfully advocated through the political process for resources to enable the Agency to fulfill its mission and serve Rhode Islanders seeking employment and independence.

The infusion of Federal stimulus money this year allowed the Office of Rehabilitation Services to branch into new service delivery opportunities with impressive results. The Council has continued to be a partner with the Agency in examining the effectiveness of strategies and services. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment is an important facilitator to the work of the Council, and it will continue to inform the establishment of goals and priorities next year.

The Executive Committee and full Council continue our support of the National Coalition of SRCs (NCSRC). On March 11, 2008 the Council voted to sign the NCSRC Resolution. The Council is unanimous in endorsing the NCSRC, and we will continue to support the growth and success of this organization.

On a personal note, I will complete my term as a Council member this year and as the present Chair. This has been a wonderful opportunity to work with some of the most professional advocates in our State – both Council members and ORS personnel. Together we have nurtured a relationship of respect while advancing positive outcomes for Rhode Islanders with disabilities. I would also like to recognize the Council's Administrative Assistant Nancy Baker for her organizational and emotional support of the Council. Thank you all for the opportunity to lead such an impressive group.

Rhode Island has 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 Rehabilitation Council will continue to work with the Office of Rehabilitation Services 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, Chair
State Rehabilitation Council

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

Janice Belasco is a consumer representative who is an active member of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee and is in her third term on the Council.

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

Stephen Brunero is an Ex-Officio member of the State Rehabilitation Council and 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 states of Mississippi and Louisiana. He is an active member of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee and is starting his second term on the Council.

Linda Deschenes is the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor of Strategic Planning and Quality Improvement Services. She is the outgoing representative of the Office of Rehabilitation Services on the Council. Linda has served on the Employment Committee and most recently on the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee, which she will continue to be a part of.

Domenic DiOrio is an educator and consultant who represents the business community. Domenic has been an active and contributing member of the Council for the past five years. He serves as Co-chair on both the Nominating and Leadership Development and the Employment committees. He often represents the Council Membership at regional conferences and is in his second term on the Council.

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 and a Masters of Public Health from Harvard University School of Public Health. 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. Mona is also the Choir Director of a 70+ multicultural group with (and without) disabilities. She is a member of both the Employment and the Nominating and Leadership Development committees and is starting her second term on the Council.

Dr. Judith L. Drew has a PhD in Rehabilitation Services from The Ohio State University. She is adjunct faculty in Rehabilitation Counseling at Salve Regina

University and Assumption College. Dr. Drew is the Chief Learning Officer for the Seven Hills Foundation, a multi-state organization, which serves a variety of people with disabilities. In addition, she owns a private practice specializing in vocational assessment, expert testimony, and career counseling for adults. Dr. Drew presently serves on the RI Governor's Commission for Disabilities where she is the liaison for the RI Business Leadership Network, and serves on the executive committee. She is also the Co-chair of the SRC Transportation Committee and is in her second SRC term.

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

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 and is in his first term on the Council.

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 is the Chair of the By-Laws Committee. Margaret is an advocate for independent living and elderly Americans. She is in her third term on the Council.

Roger Andrew Iannetta is the Vice President of Sales for Claflin Contract Furnishings overseeing sales to the healthcare industry. He is a member of the Employment Committee and in his first term on the Council.

Anna Liebenow is a community activist and sits on the SRC as a representative of the RI Statewide Independent Living Council. She is currently a member of the Transportation Committee and in her first term on the Council.

Anne LeClerc is a Planner with the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority. She is the Co-chair of the Transportation Committee and is starting her second term on the Council.

Silvermoon Mars is a Narragansett Indian Tribal Member and the Program Manager for the MPTN Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program. She is serving on the Employment Committee and is in her first term on the Council.

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 the Co-chair of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee and in her second term on the Council.

Lorna C. Ricci is the Executive Director of the Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL), an agency serving persons with disabilities, providing extensive information and referral services, home modification and assistive technology services and nursing home transition. Lorna is a member of several community collaborations, always raising awareness of disability-related issues and access. She is at the end of her first term on the Council.

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., which 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 the RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office for Diverse Learners, and is the current Chairperson of the Council. He chairs the Executive Committee and serves Ex-Officio on all Committees. David is at the end of his second term on the Council.

Vincent Rossi is the Coordinator for the RI WORKS program and the statewide Disability Program Navigator with the Department of Labor and Training. He serves on the Transportation Committee and is starting his second term on the Council.

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 of the Council and is also the Co-Chair of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee. She is starting her second term on the Council.

Joan Vendetti is our Parent from the State Parent Training and Information Center (PTIC). Joan works as the Parent Involvement Coordinator in Special Education for the West Bay area at the RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN). She is currently serving on the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee and is in her first term on the Council.

Mary Wambach serves on the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee and is in her first term on the Council. She is deaf, works full time at the Corliss Institute as the Executive Director, and serves on several other State councils and groups.

Herb Weiss is the Economic and Cultural Affairs Officer for the City of Pawtucket, where he serves as an advocate to local businesses, art groups and artists. He sits on the Employment Committee and is starting his second term on the Council.

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Employment Committee

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

The Employment Committee has set goals for activity in three areas during the forthcoming program year:

- Inter-agency coordination and cooperation by statewide agencies and committees that concentrate on generating and developing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

- Communication with federal and state government agencies responsible for overseeing compliance by employers with regulations relative to the hiring of applicants and policies for active employees. The focus would be on increasing education and assistance aimed at reducing the incidence of violations so that more employers, reluctant to do so now, would consider employing people with disabilities.

- Develop programs in addition to a Business Advisory Council designed to attract more employers to take an active interest in the work of SRC and other agencies committed to increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Respectfully submitted,
Sanford Lupovitz and Domenic DiOrio, Co-Chairs

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.

The Nominating and Leadership Development Committee is ever diligent, working closely in support of the Office of Rehabilitation (ORS) to fulfill the State Rehabilitation Council's (SRC) mission and to select professional, experienced individuals from minority, business, and disabled populations, to serve on the Council. Adhering to the Federal guidelines and our By-laws, the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee's efforts have met with success in bringing new leadership and qualified members aboard.

This past year our Committee recruited four new enterprising members and recommended the re-appointments of five members whose terms were expiring. In addition, our Committee recommended the names of two Rehabilitation Counselors from ORS as replacements for the mandated position.

The Leadership Development Program has presented several guest speakers that reported to the membership on pertinent issues addressing multiple needs of ORS consumers and provided invaluable knowledge of available resources.

Our Committee's accomplishments have been achieved through unwavering dedication, not only in successfully executing the Federal mandates, but also with ongoing assistance to compliment the efforts of our sister Committees on the Council.

The Nominating and Leadership Development Committee will continue our commitment to recruit new members, to educate, and to expand the Leadership Development Program allowing for a vibrant partnership with the Office of Rehabilitation Services.

Respectfully submitted,
Lucille Massimino and Domenic DiOrio, Co-Chairs

State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance 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 2009, 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. 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 again this year that ORS was increasingly burdened by State budget cuts and that additional resources are required. 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.

In this past year, the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee participated in the design and implementation of a Customer Satisfaction Survey to be used as a tool to review consumer satisfaction with the Agency. The surveys target status “26” and “28” closures. Status “26” is successful closure and status “28” is incomplete/unsuccessful closures. The surveys will be sent to consumers on a quarterly basis, and the findings will be used to track customer satisfaction trends and provide quality assurance and policy recommendations to ORS.

On behalf of the entire State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee, we submit our report. We would also like to thank the committee members for their dedication and hard work.

Respectfully submitted,
Catherine Sansonetti and Kate McCarthy-Barnett, Co-Chairs

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 have evaluated the purpose of the committee. Transportation is a difficult issue for a volunteer committee to tackle. We decided that it is an important issue, however, and looked for ways to be effective within the constraints of a volunteer committee.

We contacted universities to present to students some proposed research projects, including a database of human service providers, and a study on what it would take for a consumer to start a transportation service business, but were not able to make this happen this year. Another proposed research project was to have college students help identify who the organizations are that are working on transportation issues and identify common themes and transportation needs for these organizations. Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling students at Salve Regina were approached, but this has also not yet happened.

The committee decided to try to bring together state and human service agency staff working on transportation issues in an ongoing Transportation Consortium to improve and coordinate advocacy efforts. The planning for a kickoff meeting is underway, with goals to identify common issues and differences, develop a transportation resource inventory, and identify gaps and overlaps in services. The vision for this group is to:

- Create an ongoing forum and working group for transportation issues faced by Rhode Islanders with disabilities

- Focus the efforts often spread across multiple committees and meetings so that more effective, coordinated advocacy efforts representing a larger number of groups can be undertaken (legislative and funding)

- Focus on resources available and making the most of these resources across all agencies, so that a data-driven case can be made to support advocacy efforts for additional transportation funding and services

- Develop a statewide transportation needs assessment along with a statewide cost-benefit analysis of additional investment

We look forward to moving this effort along in the coming year. On behalf of the entire Transportation Committee, we submit our report, and would like to also thank the committee members for their dedication and hard work.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anne LeClerc and Judi Drew, Co-Chairs

State Rehabilitation Council Annual Breakfast Meeting May 12, 2009

2009 Members of the State Rehabilitation Council
Guest Speakers: Dan Pieroni & Michael DeNezzo - Dare to Dream
ORS Counselors: Alicia DiMasi, Patricia Ianieri and Rebecca Dine-Nyeswa

11th Annual Employer Honor Roll

"Expectation + Opportunity = Full Participation"

Frank Coletta, NBC 10 News Anchor was the *Master of Ceremonies* for the 11th Annual Employer Honor Roll.

The *Keynote Address was given by* **John Robinson**, Director of Corporate Support - WMHT Public Television Albany, NY, and was followed by the award presentations.

On October 28, 2009, Outstanding Achievement Awards were presented to the following employers for their excellence in hiring and support of employees with disabilities.

AIPSO, *Johnston*

Balsamo & Associates, *East Greenwich*

Bon Appétit, *Bristol*

General Dynamics Electric Boat Quonset Facility, *N. Kingstown*

Heritage YMCA, *Pawtucket*

Kohl's Department Store, *Warwick*

Panera Bread, *Seekonk MA*

Precision Auto Paint and Collision, *Smithfield*

Roger Williams University, *Bristol*

Town of Narragansett - Parks and Recreation

US Navy Commissary, *Newport*

Walgreens, *Middletown*

Business Youth Partnership

St. Elizabeth's Court, *Providence*

West View Health Care Center, *West Warwick*

* * *

This event was sponsored by The Rhode Island Department of Human Services/ Office of Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council.

2009 Employer Honor Roll Inductees

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS - FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2009 OCTOBER 1, 2008 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2009

756 individuals were successfully employed

2,357 individuals applied for vocational rehabilitation services.

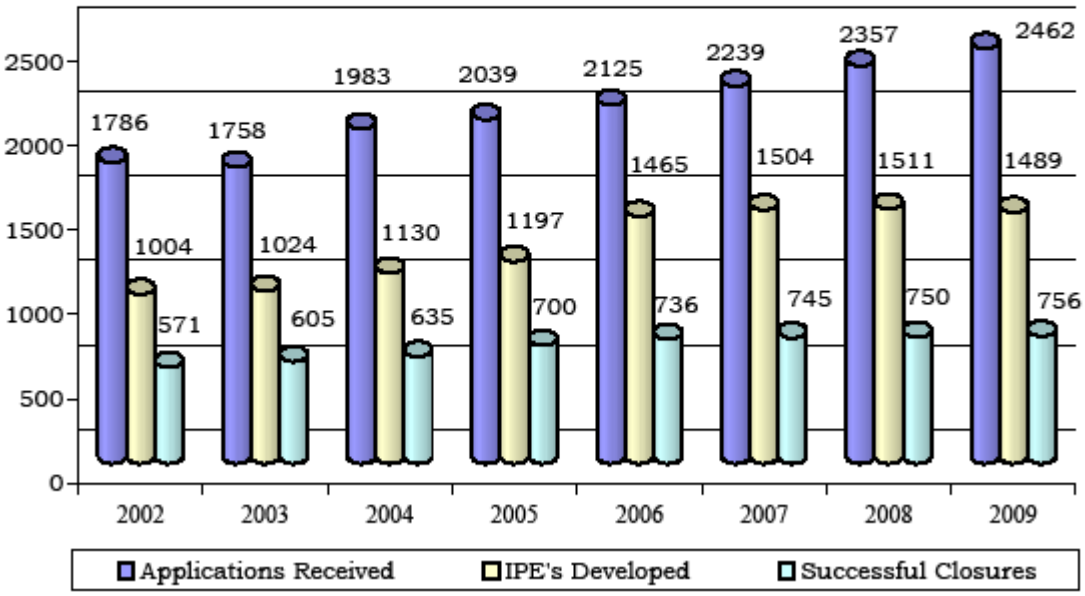
7,346 individuals with disabilities were provided vocational rehabilitation services.

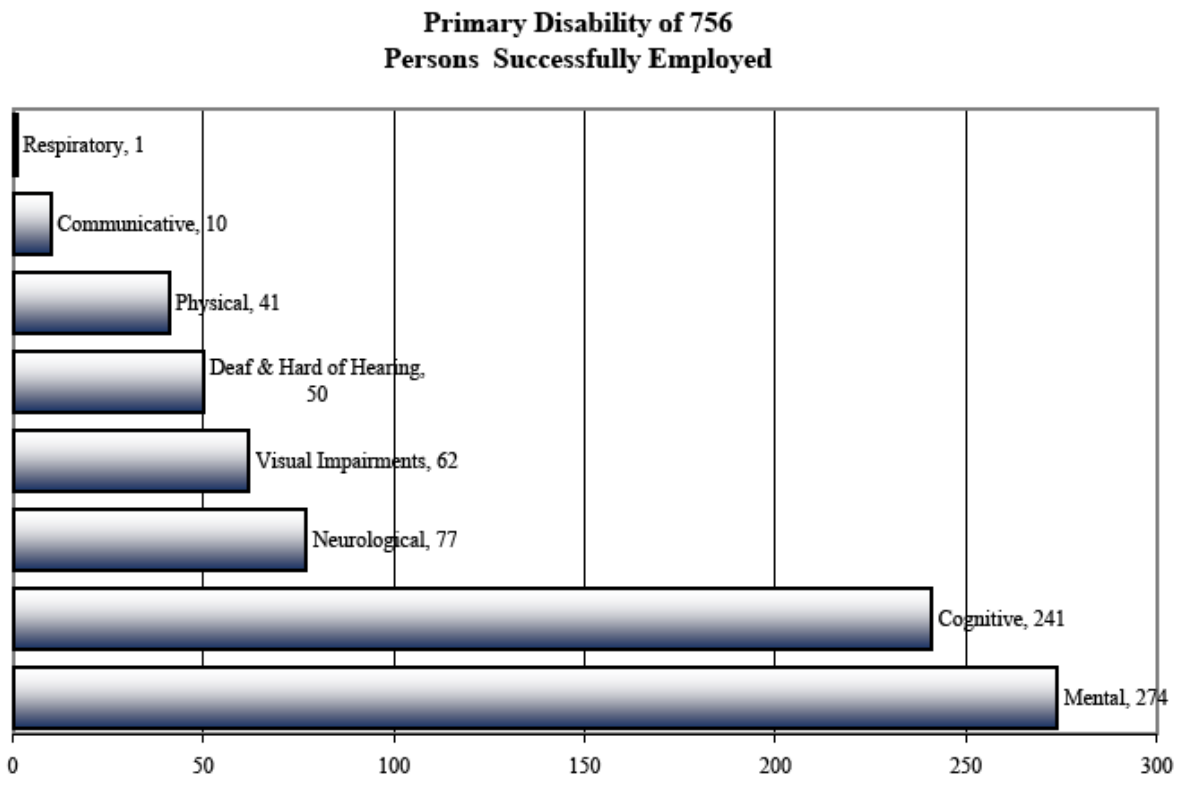
1,511 individuals worked with a vocational rehabilitation counselor to develop a new Individualized Plan for Employment [IPE].

4,260 individuals received Counseling and Guidance Services from vocational rehabilitation counselors.

3,086 individuals received services purchased from vendors. Services ranged from evaluations, medical and psychological therapies, training, personal assistant services, job placement and training.

2002-2009 Statistical Comparisons





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

1,963 individuals received information from Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) Resource Centers about assistive technology and funding options.

3,272 individuals received AT training, demonstration, loans or assistance with recycled AT devices.

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

1,702 youth with disabilities from 14-21 have been provided transition services by **18** VR counselors.

19 vending facilities were supported by the Business Enterprises Program (BEP) at Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. BEP sales totaled $**1,505,453**.

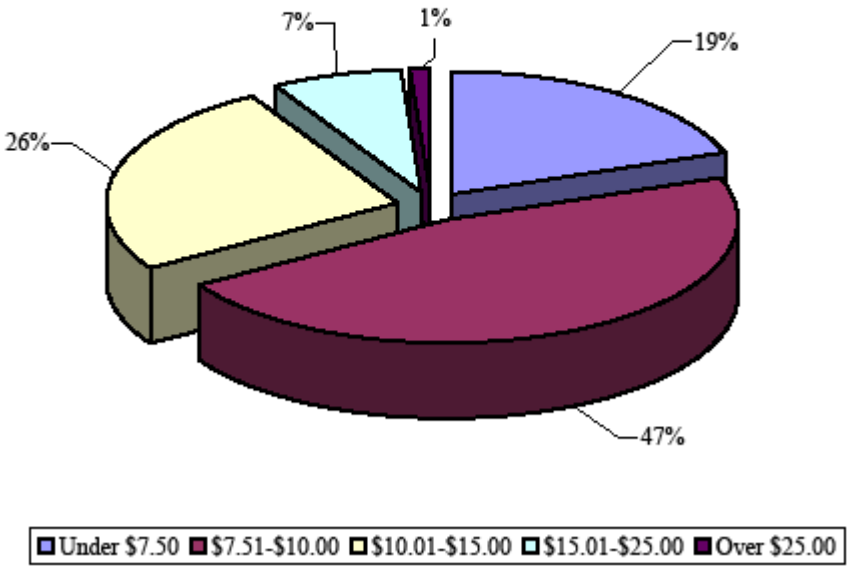
249 children, including **79** children age birth through three years old, received services from the Social Service unit. Assisted **19** toddlers in transitioning into their public school program. Orientation and mobility services were provided to **38** children, and adaptive equipment, preschool Braillers & toys were provided to **62** infants and toddlers.

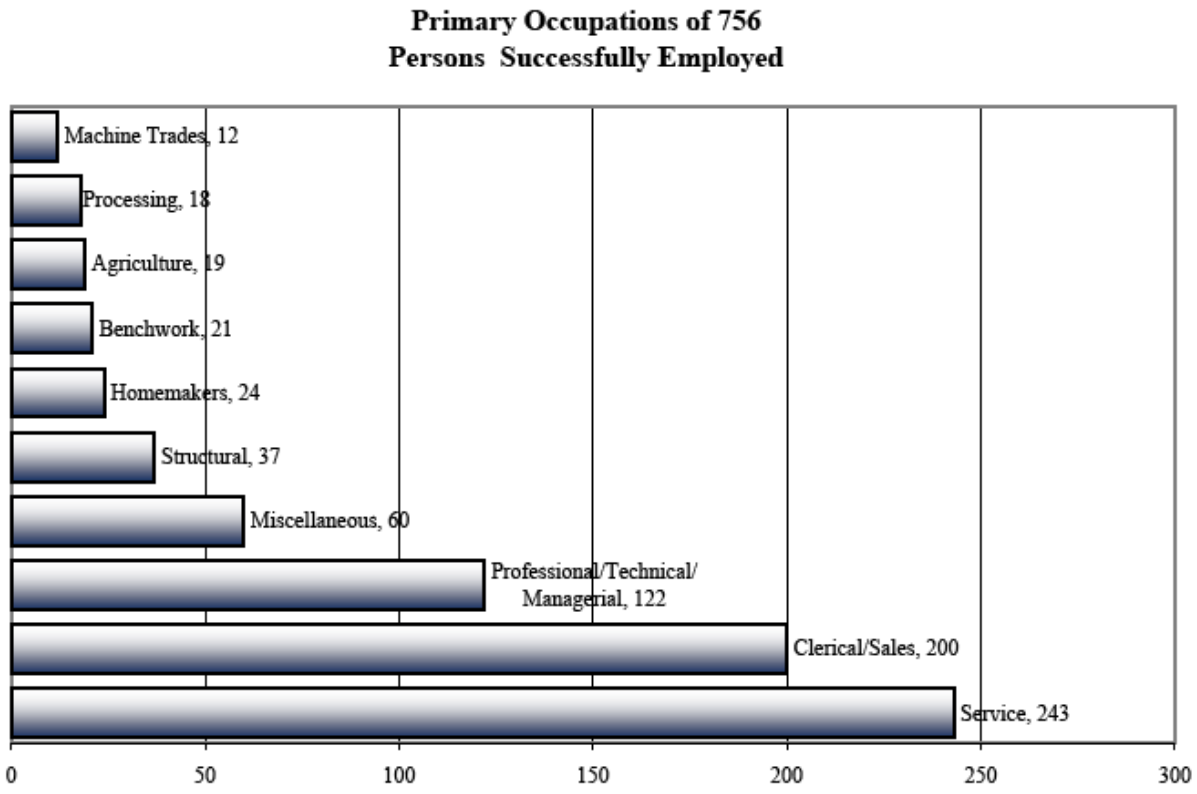
19,075 children were screened by the Vision Screening Program resulting in **639** children receiving necessary follow-up care thus reducing or eliminating the early impact of poor visual function.

689 elderly individuals who are blind or visually impaired received services from the Independent Living for Older Blind Program. **458** case plans completed. **99%** of this group reported that they feel more confident in their independent living, and **19%** 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 the summer session at Camp Mauchatea and 25 attended the winter session.

Hourly Wage of 756 Successfully Employed Individuals with Disabilities





Disability Determination Services

16,647 total cases were received by the Disability Determination Services

14,506 claims were successfully processed by the Disability Determination Services

9,477 initial claims were filed

1,275 continuing disabilities review cases, including 76 face-to-face hearings (appeals)

5,612 Consultative Examinations were purchased

11,916 Medical Evidence of Record purchased

$2,028,311 Total Medical Costs with a Total Budget of **$7,741,348**

$530.77 Cost per case

Production Per Work Year (PPWY) efficiency rate was **337.0.** The national rate was **273.8.** The performance accuracy rate for RI was **94.8%**. The net accuracy was **98.1%.** The regulatory standard is **90.6%.**

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 their employment goal.

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 RI Works (formerly FIP) program. 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 2009, the nationally-recognized LD Project served **138** 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 assist all school districts and students with disabilities and their families to plan services to help students reach career goals. ORS counselors provide technical assistance and information to school systems and work in partnership with school transition staff, 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)...

WIPA is a 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 emphasizes 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.

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 18 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”.

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.

"Zahra at 3 years old using Perkins Brailler"

- **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.

Camp Mauchatea - 2009

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.

About 5 years ago the Rhode Island DDS 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.

In 2006 and 2007, the Rhode Island DDS was 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 2009 the RI DDS processed more than 16,000 disability applications for residents of Rhode Island and achieved measures of accuracy and productivity which ranked in the top 10% in the nation. The number of individuals seeking disability determinations has increased dramatically over the past two years both in Rhode Island and nationwide, partly as a function of the widespread economic downturn. In federal FY 2009 Rhode Island DDS's case receipts increased by over 35%, which was the third highest percentage increase in the country. The RIDDS, with a diminished staff, has struggled to keep pace with its workload. The by-product unfortunately has been a progressively longer wait for disabled Rhode Islanders to receive information as to the outcome of their disability application. The case processing time in Rhode Island is the worst in the country, at more than double the national average. The continued increase in case receipts coupled with the current insufficient staffing patterns does not bode well for any improvement in the promptness of adjudication services offered to the citizens of Rhode Island.

Local Social Security Offices

380 Westminster Mall, Room 318
Providence, RI 02903
401.528.4501

30 Quaker Lane, 1st Floor
Warwick, RI 02886-0111
401.822.1463

4 Pleasant Street
Pawtucket, RI 02860
866.931.7079

Pavilion Plaza
2168 Diamond Hill Road
Woonsocket, RI 02895
401.766.8423

130 Bellevue Avenue
Newport, RI 02840
866.253.5607

2 Shaws Cove, Room 203
New London, CT 06320
866.643.3401

SUCCESS STORIES

"As reported, ORS assisted 756 individuals to obtain employment in jobs that were consistent with their goals and aspirations. Of that number, ORS would like to showcase some individuals who exemplify the benefits of employment."

Client: Vilma Cartagena
Counselor: Sheridan Lomax

Vilma Cartagena is a thirty-nine year old single mother of a teenage son. She has been coping with a serious medical disability for over eighteen years. She wanted to seek employment in a career she had a passion and calling for despite her disability. Vilma was referred by the Department of Human Services/RI Works to the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) to pursue her dream of becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA).

"Vilma is truly a success story and an inspiration for any individual with a disability in Rhode Island."

ORS Counselor Sheridan Lomax

Vilma was referred by Sheridan Lomax, her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, to Goodwill Industries, a partner vendor agency to ORS, where she was evaluated and began her preparation for work.

She participated in the Learn to Earn Program (LEEP) for four weeks. This program is designed to provide work readiness skills to clients and was funded by ORS. She graduated successfully and continued on to attend the CNA Program provided through Comprehensive Educational Services.

On June 28, 2009, Vilma graduated with flying colors and received her CNA certification. She is currently working at Mansion Nursing Home located in Central Falls. Vilma is truly a success story and an inspiration for any individual with a disability.

Client: Scott
Counselor: Karen LeBeau

Scott is a 35-year old married man with one daughter. He uses a below the elbow prosthesis. Scott wanted to complete a welding program. Since this career matched his skills and vocational interests, ORS supported this goal. As a result, Scott was hired by Electric Boat as an Arc Welder.

Scott was re-referred to ORS by Nunnery Orthotic & Prosthetic Technology. ORS provided funding to purchase the prosthesis that Scott's medical insurance was not able to initially provide. As a result, Nunnery Orthotic was able to provide a prosthetic that would allow Scott to more efficiently and independently complete all his job duties. ORS also provided funds for Scott's co-pays for his physical therapy.

Scott has been working at Electric Boat for over 4 years. He was hired using a below the elbow prosthesis, however was unable to complete all job duties assigned and needed another employee to do so. Electric Boat knew Scott was working with Nunnery Prosthetics to find a more suitable prosthesis that would enable Scott to independently complete all assigned duties. Electric Boat has been patiently waiting for over 2 years for Scott's below the elbow prosthesis to be completed so that Scott can more efficiently complete all essential job duties without assistance from other employees. They even allowed Nunnery Prosthetics and Karen LeBeau from ORS to come to Electric Boat and have Scott use a simulated prosthetic arm to determine if this particular prosthesis would allow Scott to independently perform his job. Once the prosthesis was completed, this allowed Scott to switch to a more desired schedule of second shift.

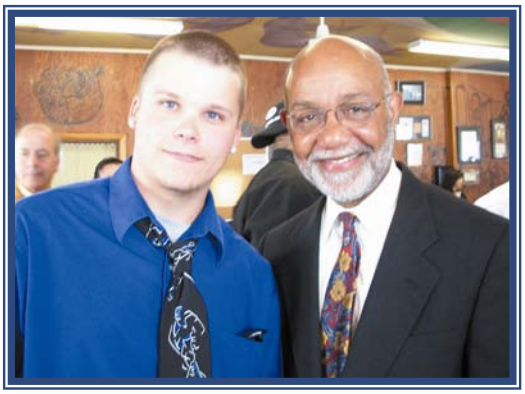
Client: Donna Cimerol-D'Arezzo
Counselor: Barbara Mulligan-White

August 24, 2006 dramatically changed the course of Donna Cimerol D'Arezzo's life forever. On this evening driving with her 14 year old daughter, Donna was in an accident that would change her life and challenge her physically, mentally and spiritually. Donna sustained a traumatic cervical spinal cord injury, consistent with complete quadriplegia at C6 and C7, that requires she use a wheelchair for mobility. Donna was referred to ORS through St. Joseph's Rehabilitation Unit.

Through determination and hard work Donna returned to what she loves most, teaching elementary art. Donna had been an art teacher for the last 20 years and was very much valued by her students, parents and co-workers. She started back to work on a part-time basis in March, 2008 and as of September, 2009 has returned to full-time employment.

The Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) has had the opportunity to assist Donna with her transition back to work. ORS and Donna worked with her employer to implement the necessary worksite accommodations. We have been able to assist her in purchasing art tools that are easier for her to manipulate. Through the assistance of ORS she was able to attend Shake A Leg and gain valuable skills that will help her in her daily living. In addition, she has a passion to assist others in the same situation. ORS may assist her with more accessibility at home and with her transportation needs. Donna is very anxious to drive again.

Client: Eric
Counselor: Teresa Scarmuzzo-DiMattia



Eric and Bill Scott (Amos House)

Eric is a 19 year old young man who has demonstrated a great deal of determination to overcome some of the challenges associated with a learning disability. In an effort to determine a promising future of financial independence and success, he and his family initiated a referral to ORS.

When Eric started the ORS process with his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Teresa, he was unsure of his vocational goal. He knew he was a hands-on learner, but did not know what field would be the best fit for him. After sending Eric for vocational testing, Teresa and Eric explored training programs in business, welding & carpentry. He chose the Amos House Carpentry program and thrived. Through his efforts, Eric was able to build a solid foundation for his future and to feel a sense of accomplishment about a job well-done. He not only found gainful employment with the Pezucco Construction Company, but he also is furthering his education at CCRI.

Eric's respect for Teresa and Bill "played a big part in his success"
Diane (Eric's mother)

In an email, Eric's mother, Diane, expressed her gratitude to ORS and Teresa. She stated, "Eric thinks very highly of you and Bill (of Amos House)." Diane believes Eric's respect for Teresa and Bill "played a big part in his success."

Client: Ginger Seekell
Counselor: Danielle Williams

Ginger Seekell has been an on-going client of ORS since 1995 when she was referred by her school's special education department. Ginger graduated from high school in 1997 and then attended New England Technical Institute to enhance her computer skills. Ginger was employed as a central office worker in 2000, and her case was closed as she was successfully employed.

In 2007 Ginger re-opened her case with ORS in order to obtain assistance with maintaining a new job at Looking Upwards in Middletown. Ginger obtained employment as a receptionist. ORS sponsored an Assistive Technology evaluation to identify what tools would assist her in performing the job. The evaluation determined she needed a mouth stick and a new headset in order to maintain this position. ORS was able to assist her in obtaining these technologies.

After being in this job for 2 years Ginger asked for ORS' assistance in maintaining her job by assisting her in updating her work space. An additional technology evaluation was completed, and ORS was able to support Ginger in obtaining a new computer and a smaller keyboard.

Ginger is now able to do her job more efficiently and with greater independence. She is generally the first smiling face you see when you walk into the Looking Upwards office, and is a huge asset to the agency.

Client: Joshua Martins
Counselor: Jane Cannata

Joshua Martins is a 33-year old man who possesses a visual impairment which occurred as a result of complications from Type I juvenile diabetes.

Joshua had been attending Northeastern University where he was pursuing a career in Criminal Psychology prior to losing his sight. After several extensive surgeries on both eyes, he lost sight to the wet form of diabetic retinopathy. At that time, Joshua felt that who and what he was, was now gone forever.

"ORS allowed me to pursue my goals providing me with assistance when needed."
Joshua Martins

About a year later after regaining a sense of physical and emotional healthiness, Joshua came to ORS for assistance with reestablishing his life. Jane Cannata, his ORS Counselor, arranged for mobility instruction which included learning to use a guide cane properly. Shortly after he completed this training, he approached Jane with hopes of returning to college. This time looking to attain his Bachelors degrees in Secondary Education and History from the University of Rhode Island. This agency helped him with Assistive Technology that he used throughout his education and on the job, computer training, additional training when necessary, tuition assistance, utilizing the RIDE program, learning Braille which he used while seeking employment, and providing information and possibilities available to him to make this decision a reality.

Along the way, Joshua had unforeseen obstacles that he encountered including a kidney transplant. However, ORS was able to be a resource and assist Joshua in finding answers and solutions.

In 2006, Joshua received his BA's in Secondary Education with Middle School Endorsement and History with a minor in Philosophy. He works as a substitute teacher in the South Kingstown School Department while he is in pursuit of a full-time teacher position.

STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS as of 9/30/09

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)

FY2004 - 30 greater	FY2007 - 9 greater
FY2005 - 65 greater	FY2008 - 5 greater
FY2006 - 36 greater	FY2009 - 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%)

FY2004 - 58.31%	FY2007 - 59.89%
FY2005 - 64.28%	FY2008 - 62.80%
FY2006 - 59.79%	FY2009 - 62.84%

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%)

FY2004 - 90.87%	FY2007 - 92.62%
FY2005 - 90.57%	FY2008 - 95.47%
FY2006 - 92.80%	FY2009 - 95.11%

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

FY2004 - 100.00%	FY2007 - 100.00%
FY2005 - 100.00%	FY2008 - 100.00%
FY2006 - 100.00%	FY2009 - 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)

FY2004 - .555	FY2007 - .530
FY2005 - .539	FY2008 - .550
FY2006 - .532	FY2009 - .540

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)

FY2004 - 60.31%	FY2007 - 64.78%
FY2005 - 63.09%	FY2008 - 55.59%
FY2006 - 65.15%	FY2009 - 54.25%

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)

FY2004 - .914	FY2007 - .854
FY2005 - .906	FY2008 - .900
FY2006 - .927	FY2009 - .820

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 group to the RI Assistive Technology program ATAP - the Assistive Technology Access Partnership - funded through the AT Act. RICAT is actively involved in providing guidance and recommendations to ATAP.

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 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.

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

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calling 401.421.7005 ext. 318.