

ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.2(c)

**SUMMARY OF INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STATE REHABILITATION
COUNCIL; RESPONSE OF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT; AND EXPLANATIONS FOR
REJECTION OF INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services appreciates the time and effort of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) in reviewing the Annual Update of the State Plan for FFY 2006. The SRC is a valued partner in fulfilling the mission of the vocational rehabilitation program – successful high-quality employment outcomes for people with disabilities. The ORS also appreciates the SRC's commitment to support the activities of the Agency pertaining to strengthening relationships with employers and other community organizations.

The Annual Report of the SRC has been reviewed, and the following information has been provided. During FFY 2005, a major focus for the SRC has been advocacy. Acting as a strong undivided front while advocating to the State Legislature for passage of the Medicaid Buy-In legislation as well as voicing the Council's complaint with slashing funds for summer interns. Reinforcing a fellow council member's research project with the European apprenticeship model as the information will enhance the development of employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in Rhode Island.

Members of the Council attended the Public Forums, co-sponsored by the Governor's Commission on Disabilities, ORS, and other entities in FFY 2005, held throughout the state to listen to the issues

identified by individuals with disabilities as well as service providers. Many members actively participated in the discussions or presented at these forums.

The council held a joint meeting with the Office of Rehabilitation Services through the presentation of the Annual State Plan Update for FFY 2005, in June, 2004 in an attempt to offer the general public additional opportunity to address our membership.

The Office of Rehabilitation Services conducted an extensive Consumer Satisfaction Survey. The Council was most pleased with the overall result and the level of commitment from the ORS staff to continue to improve outreach to individuals with disabilities.

The most important and critical work of the council occurs in the committees. During FFY 2005 the committee chairs are holding scheduled meetings, with published agendas available for all Council members and guests to plan attendance. Summaries of the committees' activities are included in this document.

The SRC is committed to support the mission to attain full integration of all avenues of employment. The Council must continue to open the doors for individuals with disabilities to be gainfully employed with their peers. The Office of Rehabilitation Services is the venue.

By-Laws Committee

The By-Laws sub-committee is the only body that reacts to the requests of the Council. As the Committee is not a pro-active group, they draft proposals for amendments to the By-Laws in response to issues raised by members of the Council.

One proposal was presented to the Council late in 2004 reflecting an alteration in the election process of officers. ORS supports the work of the Committee as they strive to make the SRC a strong partner in the rehabilitation process. The By-laws changes will lead to this goal.

Employment Committee

The Employment Committee met with, and has developed an ongoing working relationship with the new Workforce Development Supervisor of the Office of Rehabilitation Services.

Members of the employment committee actively participated in the planning for the Employer Honor Roll which took place in FFY 2005. They also volunteered to assist with necessary tasks at the event to ensure its success. ORS appreciates the support received from the SRC to conduct this important annual recognition of the employers who have hired ORS customers.

Members of the Employment Committee participated in the planning of the bi-annual Partnerships to Employment Conference, which also occurred in FFY 2005. The conference offered numerous workshops related to employment trends, job opportunities, and linkages to the business community. Also, as a feature of the conference, a one-day program was offered on job development skills for professionals. The ORS believes that with the involvement of the SRC in planning the conference, the Council is helping to underscore the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program – successful high-quality, competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities.

Each ORS region has identified a job development coordinator. These Coordinators will become the point people for ORS in each region and will facilitate job development activities and coordinate with the ORS Workforce Development Supervisor.

David Hagner, Ph.D., a recognized expert in the field of job development/supported employment, has provided training to ORS counselors in and around the area of job development and placement. The one-day training program was mandatory for all ORS counselor staff. The SRC Employment Committee had input into the planning of this important training activity. ORS is grateful that the Employment Committee has offered significant support to the ORS mission.

The Employment Committee is working with ORS to establish a reliable, accessible “job ready” list of ORS customers to facilitate the job-finding process. The ORS Workforce Development Supervisor has the establishment of this list as a high priority. In addition, ORS has joined two more Rhode Island Chambers of Commerce, which may be helpful in promoting employment opportunities and developing business relationships for individuals with disabilities.

The ORS Workforce Development Supervisor is now an active participant with the Employment Committee. This has enabled the Employment Committee to provide greater support and input to increase employment outcomes for ORS customers.

Goals for FFY 2006 include:

ORS is conducting a comprehensive needs assessment of job development activities provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, netWORKri partners, and Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) vendors. Information from this assessment will be shared with the Employment Committee in FFY 2006.

The continuing development of an easily accessible registry of employment ready clients is a high priority for ORS in FFY 2005, and its implementation and utilization in FFY 2006.

The ORS Workforce Development Supervisor is developing a series of job seeking skills workshops to enhance the ability of ORS customers to engage in successful job finding activities. Additionally, one region is targeting students in transition from high school to possible employment for job seeking skills training.

The SRC will be collaborating with ORS as it defines its role as the resource to both clients with disabilities and employers.

Membership/Leadership

FFY 2005 has proven to be a very challenging year for the Nominating and Leadership Committee. Two Co-Chairpersons were appointed by the SRC Council Chairperson to share the responsibilities of this vital committee.

Several meetings have been held and the committee has now expanded to a total of 6 members. The main agenda for these meetings was to recruit the most reputable, enthusiastic and responsive individuals

who would be forthcoming in their motivation to assist individuals with disabilities by serving on various committees throughout the SRC. One interview was conducted to replace a vacancy on the Council and this individual is now serving on the Employment Committee.

The committee also met to present a slate of officers for the coming year. The Council unanimously approved of this slate and letters were forwarded to the Governor for final approval. A listing was also prepared for those Council members whose appointments were expiring and would require approvals by the Council and the Governor.

State Plan and Policy Committee

The committee has met over the course of the year to review and formulate comment on a number of policies developed at ORS.

The Committee Chair and Policy Review Committee was involved in the decision to develop, review, and make recommendations on a “Policy Development Tracking Guide” to be used for tracking policies and assisting in the general review process.

Seven ORS policies were reviewed and vetted through the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) process they included:

Confidentiality 105.4

Employment 115.10

Transportation 115.21

Motor Vehicle Modification 115.23

Adaptive Housing 115.26

Rehabilitation Technology 115.16

Occupational Tools, Equipment, Licenses, Initial Stock and Supplies 115.20

A number of other ORS policies which have been reviewed by SRC and are currently being vetted through to the APA process include:

Homemaker 115.4

Transition Services 115.38

Reversion to Donor Prohibition 115.37

Post Secondary Education and Vocational Training 115.28

Committee members have met and communicated with the ORS Deputy Administrator to stay current with recent trends in policy revision, amending and updating.

The SRC Policy Committee is participating in an ORS Policy Review Team to explore updating numerous ORS policies in FFY 2005 and FFY 2006.

Quality Assurance Committee

During FFY 2004 and FFY 2005 the Committee successfully completed a Consumer Satisfaction Survey on a local level, and ORS was able to interface our performance on a National Level as well. The Committee was pleased to see that its work within the State has continued to demonstrate ORS commitment to improve services to customers of ORS. It was apparent that the Committee succeeded in the sampling of individuals giving the Committee a broad scope of the work that the Office of Rehabilitation Services has accomplished and lending the SRC insight in areas of continued growth and improvement.

In FFY 2005, a member of the SRC is working with ORS to develop and implement a comprehensive needs assessment to be distributed among targeted groups including ORS counselors, netWORKri partners, and Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP). The purpose of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment is to determine how effectively ORS provides employment-related services.

Issues and Responses

The following are the comments and recommendations of the SRC related to the Plan updates, and the responses of the Office of Rehabilitation Services.

ATTACHMENT 4.9 (C) (4) Evidence of Collaboration regarding Supported Employment and Extended Services

ISSUE:

Pilot Project for Supported Employment – What types of supported employment are consumers working in? SRC would like to see the data related to this.

RESPONSE:

The Office of Rehabilitation Services has developed the Supported Employment Pilot Project as a strategy to enhance the quality and quantity of employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities. ORS will provide the SRC with data including the number of outcomes, describing the types of employment outcomes, and hourly wages for these successful employment outcomes during FFY 2005.

ATTACHMENT 4.11 (b) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

The SRC commends ORS for hiring qualified individuals with disabilities.

The SRC commends ORS for their positive efforts in training staff in cultural sensitivity and issues.

ATTACHMENT 4.12 (a) Results of State Wide Assessment of Needs

ISSUE:

Even though consumers are overall satisfied, how is ORS responding to the data regarding only 39% of the consumers working full or part time (almost half of total respondents), received medical benefits?

RESPONSE:

ORS acknowledges that there are a number of individuals with the most significant disabilities employed in jobs that do not offer benefits. Many of these individuals are recipients of SSI or SSDI, therefore, providing the availability of Medicaid or Medicare coverage. However, with the implementation of the Supported Employment Pilot Project, ORS is taking steps to increase the number of successful employment outcomes in jobs that may provide benefits and offer opportunities for career advancements. ORS has hired a new Workforce Development Supervisor. One of the goals of this office is to increase the number of quality employment outcomes including medical benefits for consumers of the state Vocational Rehabilitation program.

ISSUE:

How does ORS explain the decrease reported by consumers that their current job is one that ORS and/or a Community Rehabilitation Partner helped secure, from 38% in 2002 to 29% in 2003?

RESPONSE:

Although the statistics stated in the Consumer Satisfaction Survey indicate a slight decline in the number of individuals reporting that an ORS counselor or Community Rehabilitation Program had not assisted them to secure their current employment, this may not indicate decreased involvement by ORS in the job finding process. ORS counselors actively work with their customers to provide them with the tools necessary to conduct an independent job search of which they may be capable. Also, individuals who were surveyed may have been uncertain of the ORS counselors' role in the job finding process. In order to ensure that ORS customers are receiving the services necessary to achieve a successful employment outcome, clinical supervision occurs regularly by ORS regional supervisors. ORS counselors receive ongoing professional development in all aspects of the vocational rehabilitation process, in particular, in job development.

ISSUE:

Does ORS plan to do follow-up surveys?

RESPONSE:

ORS is currently in the process of conducting a statewide comprehensive needs assessment with assistance from the SRC. As part of the assessment, ORS has reviewed previously conducted surveys by ORS and the SRC, as well as surveys conducted by the D.D. Council, and the Governor's Commission on Disabilities. This data will be synthesized along with the data collected from the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment. Results from this assessment will be shared with the Council. The Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment will survey ORS partners at the netWORKri One-Stop Centers, Community Rehabilitation Program providers, and ORS counselor staff.

ISSUE:

2003 DDD-Statewide Quality Consortium Employment Survey: The results of the employment survey show that 21% (699) of people receiving services from a DD agency held at least one job in 2003, however, only 131 of those jobs were in competitive employment. The SRC would like to know what ORS's short and long-term plans are to increase the number of competitive employment outcomes for DD consumers.

RESPONSE:

The 2003 DDD Survey included individuals employed at sheltered workshops throughout Rhode Island. The ORS, in keeping with federal Standards and Performance indicators 1.4 and 1.5, is focused on competitive integrated employment opportunities secured in the community and outside sheltered workshops. The Office of Rehabilitation Services has entered into a Cooperative Agreement with the Department of Mental Health Retardation and Hospitals (MHRH) to address the employment needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and those with behavioral health issues. In particular, the Cooperative Agreement enables the DHS/ORS to capture more Federal funds to provide vocational rehabilitation services to these targeted populations. In addition, through the Cooperative Agreement with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) services are provided to students with disabilities, including those with developmental disabilities who are in transition from high school to post secondary activities (employment). ORS is in the process of renewing the Cooperative Agreement with RIDE for another five-year period.

ISSUE:

ORS Provider Needs Assessment of Survey: The SRC would like to see all data resulting from this survey.

RESPONSE:

ORS will be pleased to share all data collected from the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment with the SRC.

ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c) (1) State's Goals and Priorities

ISSUE:

Of the six hundred thirty-five (635) individuals who were closed successfully employed in FFY2004, which was a 5% increase over FY2003, what percentage were in competitive employment? And of this percentage, how many are still employed competitively?

RESPONSE:

All ORS customers who have been closed successfully employed are working in competitive employment. That is, any individual with a disability who is employed in a job earning at least minimum wage, in an integrated setting in the community, either with supports, or not with supports, is working in competitive employment. When an individual begins employment, the ORS counselor remains involved with the customer for at least ninety days to ensure that the customer is able to perform the job successfully before the case is closed with the ORS. At this time, however, long-term tracking does not occur. If an individual experiences difficulties on the job after case closure, the ORS counselor may provide additional

services to resolve any problems and maintain the employment. This may occur under post-employment services (Status 32).

ISSUE:

The SRC strongly supports ORS's initiative to coordinate with the Connecticut 121 Project for Native Americans.

The SRC would like to know more about the CT 21 Project for Native Americans.

RESPONSE:

ORS will be pleased to share information regarding its collaboration with the Connecticut 121 Project for Native Americans as data is collected.

ISSUE:

Related to this, given the closure of Projects with Industries in Rhode Island, and the possible elimination of the Program on the Federal level, the SRC would like to know how ORS works with Projects with Industries.

Additionally, will this affect the CT 21 Project?

RESPONSE:

The Projects with Industries (PWI) program was established with the passage of the 1978 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act. ORS had partnered with the Rhode Island PWI to expand employment resources for its customers. As a result of the collaboration with the Connecticut 121 program,

ORS has already been able to outreach to the Native American population in Rhode Island – already experiencing the benefits of working with this PWI initiative. The linkages that are being developed may enable ORS to have a lasting positive impact on the Native American population in Rhode Island assisting with increased employment outcomes.

ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c) (2) (a) Order of Selection

ISSUE:

The SRC would like to know how the Order of Selection is implemented by ORS.

RESPONSE:

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended and its accompanying regulations permit states to impose an Order of Selection for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. This occurs when there is not sufficient resources, either fiscal or staff, to provide services to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State. A waiting list for services may be established for those who do not meet the criteria for the particular category being served. Rhode Island has been on an Order of Selection since 1993. In spite of this, ORS has been able to provide services to eligible individuals with disabilities in Categories 1 and 2 (most significant and significant disabilities), whereby, there is no waiting list. The definitions for the categories appear in Attachment 4.12 (c) (2) (a).

ORS looks forward to continued collaboration with the SRC, and will provide the Council with additional data and information as requested throughout the Federal Fiscal year.

ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.9 (C) (4)

**EVIDENCE OF COLLABORATION REGARDING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT AND
EXTENDED SERVICES**

ORS is an active partner in collaborating with the Department of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals (MHRH) and private, non-profit vendors of supported employment services to provide efficient and effective services leading to integrated, competitive employment. There are now active Supported Employment Advisory Councils for both the Division of Behavioral Healthcare and Division of Developmental Disabilities. ORS provides quarterly statistics regarding outcomes by vendor and an analysis of the occupations and wages of those individuals who become successfully employed. The advisory committees' meetings also are used to clarify procedures and address concerns. In addition, ORS staff provides ongoing training and technical assistance to staffs of supported employment vendors, which is essential due to the turnover rate in those agencies.

The outcome-based Pilot Project for Supported Employment which began in April of 2003 achieved thirty-one successful employment outcomes in FFY2004. One new vendor will be participating in FFY2005. The service delivery process has been streamlined. Preliminary data indicates that individuals are employed more hours in a variety of occupations.

Individuals continue to be successfully transitioned to extended services by MHRH when ORS training at the job site and other needed ORS services have been completed.

Collaboration with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP's) related to implementation of the One-Stop Career Systems continues. Four (4) Employer Service Network committees that include CRP's, ORS and the Department of Labor and Training have been established. They are working together to improve employment services and outcomes resulting from the One-Stop System.

In FFY 2005, The Maher Center lost a large contract at the naval base in Newport, Rhode Island. This had a significant impact on numerous current and former clients of ORS. The Newport Naval Galley in particular saw a large number of layoffs. The ORS Deputy Administrator, the Supervisor for Region V, the Director of the Maher Center along with other staff members from both agencies, met to discuss the current the layoff situation. The Maher Center indicated that they were planning on expanding the Laundry Facility, as they had obtained a large commercial contract from a hospitality resort in Newport. Additionally, the Maher Center still maintains several contracts from United States Navy bases throughout New England. As the laundry is an integrated, competitive setting, it was agreed that ORS would help fund the transfer and training of workers to the laundry utilizing supported employment services. Those who did not wish to work at the laundry site, or were unable to do so, would be referred for community based placement. The Supported Employment Pilot Program was discussed with the Maher staff, and it was agreed that they could benefit from this new form of service delivery.

A subsequent training was conducted at the netWORKri in Warren, which was attended by Maher staff, ORS staff from Region V, the ORS Supervisor from Region V, as well as the ORS Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Specialist. NetWORKri staff also assisted in providing input to the group relative to Unemployment Benefits and Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI). After the training was completed, the Maher Center began to place the workers who had been displaced from their jobs due to the

contract cuts. ORS continues to collaborate with Maher, and although the pilot is a relatively new venture, thus far it has led to several new employment opportunities for our mutual clients. ORS will continue efforts to assure that the Maher/ORS relationship remains a positive and productive one.

ORS is also collaborating with the Sherlock Center on Disabilities, the Rhode Island Department of Education Office of Special Populations, the Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN), the Regional Educational Collaboratives. Additionally, the Rhode Island Division of Developmental Disabilities, and ORS have a five-year grant called “Family Support 360”, which focuses on the gaps in services to students with developmental disabilities transitioning from secondary education to adult service providers. The grant will focus on systems change activities to ensure a seamless service delivery system for individuals with developmental disabilities.

ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.11 (b)

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

FFY 2005 continues to focus on increasing staff skills and information bases as well as enabling staff to meet CSPD standards for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Rhode Island (C) has a total FTE of ninety-two (92), which includes thirty-nine VR Counselor positions. For additional personnel information, see Addendum I, revised Organization Chart. This year the agency has worked with approximately 5,800 individuals, with an average counselor caseload of 130. Since September, 2004, four Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor vacancies occurred and three have been filled by individuals with Master's Degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling. ORS anticipates that this will be the case with the remaining vacancy, for which recruitment is underway. Over the next three to five years, ORS estimates that approximately twenty-two individuals (administrators, supervisors, and counselors) will be eligible for retirement. In anticipation of this, ORS is providing opportunities for skills mastery and leadership development whenever possible. Staff members have the opportunity to participate in such activities as the State Plan development, 107 on-site monitoring reviews conducted annually by RSA, RCEP advisory committees, policy development, as well as participation in leadership and management skills training. All employees are afforded the opportunity to participate in training opportunities that will enhance their skills and promote professional development.

Currently there are four VR counselors who have CSPD plans. Two Senior Rehabilitation Counselors have either one or two courses to complete. One Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf who is actively participating in a Master's Degree program is nearing graduation. The other Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf is currently on parental leave and will resume her studies shortly after her return in August, 2005. An additional rehabilitation counselor needs to participate in a full Master's

degree program. All other VR counselors meet the CSPD standard established by the agency. This means that of the thirty-seven counselor positions that are presently filled, thirty-two meet the standard (approximately 86%). In addition, all VR Field Supervisors and both Deputy Administrators meet the CSPD standard.

In addition to the satellite Masters degree program developed collaboratively with Assumption College, staff can take courses at Salve Regina University to earn a Masters degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. Discussions continue with Assumption College and Salve Regina College to ensure that the present and projected personnel needs of ORS are considered in program planning.

ORS makes every effort to hire staff in accordance with the Department's affirmative action policies. ORS job notices are widely distributed among community-based organizations and the internet to attract qualified individuals for the positions of vocational rehabilitation counselor, particularly, individuals with disabilities and those of minority backgrounds. ORS has hired a number of qualified individuals with disabilities (visual impairments, deafness, etc.). Interpreters and CART reporters, when appropriate, are provided to ensure full participation of staff with hearing impairments in all training and staff meetings. The Information Services Technician manages the ORS and ATAP web pages, has expertise in providing materials in alternate formats, develops electronic tools for counselors and participates with other staff in improving the implementation of informed choice for customers of the VR program through the development of fact sheets and web-based information. Accordingly, ORS assures that all information disseminated to staff with disabilities as well as to our customers is accessible.

Recent training on cultural sensitivity and meeting the needs of non-English speaking individuals who seek services from ORS will improve the ways in which this agency addresses the needs of people with diverse cultural backgrounds. Additional training will include more information on use of the AT&T language line, how to access and use an interpreter effectively, and other cultural issues that may impact on the rehabilitation process. Members of ORS' Cultural Diversity Cadre will have a role in future training in this area.

The Training Coordinator oversees all training activities within the agency, including maintenance of CRC certification. The training coordinator also has the lead role in implementation of the Ticket to Work Program for VR and coordinates a SSA grant for Benefits Planning and Outreach. Ticket to Work and Benefits Planning and Outreach continue to be training focuses. Training efforts enables counselors to support "informed" choice by the individuals with the most significant disabilities who receive SSI and SSDI benefits. Another focus is the development of strategies to enhance the agency's response to increased inquiries and referrals and planning for employment services. In addition, the training coordinator will evaluate results from an assessment inventory to identify additional staff training and performance needs. Programs will be developed that directly address identified needs.

An in-house training program for new staff, implemented in 2001, continues to offer opportunities to expand learning about specific vocational rehabilitation issues (disabling conditions, independent living, assistive technology, benefits, medical, ethics and confidentiality, job development, transition, etc.). Subject experts, either in-house or through other community resources (RCEP, local chapter of NRA, RI Office of Training & Development, Brain Injury Foundation, M.S. Society, Disability Law Center) provide this

training, which is mandatory for new staff and is offered as a refresher to more experienced staff. ORS will continue to build upon and improve this training program during the balance of FY 2005 and into FY 2006.

A focus on employment-related training is underway in FFY 2005 and includes training in Labor Market Information, building employer relationships, job development and placement techniques and job-person matching. In addition, approximately 20 counselors and managers participated in the 5th Annual Partnership to Employment Conference, which focused on employment related topics and the building of relationships with employers.

ORS staff participates on a number of RCEP planning committees, including those that plan training for support staff, counselors for the blind, rehabilitation counselors for the deaf, and supervisors. The training enables staff to identify resources within the region as well as within the state for training opportunities that meet staff needs.

In an effort to enhance supervisory and management skills, three additional supervisors have participated in management training offered by the Rhode Island Office of Training and Development. Eleven supervisors are scheduled to participate in an upcoming training seminar, *Coaching Issues for Supervisors*. ORS continues with its plan to enhance clinical supervision as a key strategy to increase quality employment outcomes. During FFY 2005, the Deputy Administrator has continued to meet bi-weekly with regional supervisors as a group; in addition, the administrative team meets quarterly with each Regional Supervisor on an individual basis. These meetings are for the purpose of evaluating regional and individual approaches to achieving outcomes, and insuring that staff have the skills and resources to effect successful employment outcomes and meet established agency goals.

In FFY 2005, as in preceding years, staff have participated, and continue to participate in training opportunities geared to enhance skills and support professional growth that supports the mission of this agency and insures that Rhode Islanders with disabilities are served by qualified staff. ORS medical and psychological consultant staff is providing, and will continue to provide, "Consultant Roundtable" staff development and training in areas of mental health, physical disabilities, and worksite wellness.

ORS Assistant Administrator/Transition Coordinator is a member of the Region 1 RCEP Transition Planning Committee, providing an opportunity to access information about promising practices around the region and share this information with ORS Transition Counselors through regularly scheduled meetings, the use of IT, and other scheduled training. The Transition Coordinator for the Department of Education also participates in these meetings. ORS Transition Counselors provide in-service training to school personnel on issues related to disability and the rehabilitation process. ORS Counselors also have the opportunity to participate in training programs offered by LEAs and the Department of Education, consistent with the CSPD requirements of the Rehabilitation Act and IDEA.

ORS continues to promote Leadership Development through its partnership with the New England Institute for Rehabilitation Leadership and Region I RCEP. ORS is sponsoring three staff members including two supervisors and one senior rehabilitation counselor at this training to promote effective future leaders in the vocational rehabilitation field.

ORS expects that the Agency will be in 100% compliance within the next twenty-four months.

ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12(a)

RESULTS OF STATE WIDE ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS

In FFY 2005, ORS together with the SRC, has undertaken the task of developing and implementing a comprehensive needs assessment focusing on three targeted groups – ORS counselors, netWORKri staff, and Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP's). In particular, the needs assessment is looking closely at services provided that directly relate to job development, placement and employment related activities.

The results of the statewide assessment of needs will be completed in the last quarter of FFY2005. The requirement to submit the State Plan updates by May 31, 2005 precludes additional detail at this time. However, our plans are to submit the analysis of the needs assessment findings to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) by September 30, 2005.

The following is the summary of previous satisfaction surveys and assessments that were reviewed and incorporated into the ORS comprehensive Needs Assessment.

2003 ORS Consumer Satisfaction Survey Overview

In 2003, “closed” (600) and “active” (201) ORS customers were surveyed to assess their satisfaction with ORS services and the outcomes they achieved. The telephone survey investigated 11 areas of satisfaction related to the following: general awareness and expectations of ORS services, overall program and staff rating, satisfaction of community providers, and outcomes achieved. Participants also assessed program participation, barriers they experienced and perceptions of met and unmet needs.

People come to ORS with many expectations, the most frequent being to obtain employment. 57% of Closed respondents said that all or most of their expectations were met and reported being very satisfied with the quality of ORS personnel, i.e. counselors were knowledgeable, courteous, and kept promises, etc.

Overall, satisfaction with initial contact, awareness of services and development of active employment plans increased in 2003, along with customers' understanding of services and the employment plan's purpose. Additionally, most customers were *very* or *somewhat clear* about their roles and responsibilities as participants in VR services and thought their employment plans reflected their goals.

Regarding overall satisfaction with services, 84% of all customers were satisfied with access to ORS counselors and the quality of their employment plans. The top five services utilized most were also services that customers considered important. They were: help in identifying interests, strengths and abilities; help identifying appropriate vocational goals; help finding a job; help understanding how employment affects benefits; and help practicing for job interviews. Customers reported an average of 85% satisfaction rating for these services.

A little over half of all surveyed customers reported currently receiving public benefits. Almost 66% of this group had access to benefits planning and were informed about the impact of employment on benefits.

In 2003, almost half of all respondents reported they are working full or part-time, with 74 % indicating a high job satisfaction rating. 36% reported promotions and 39% receive medical benefits. Only

29% reported that their current job is one that ORS and/or a Community Rehabilitation Partner helped secure - a decrease from 38% in 2002.

Overall, respondents reported an 80% satisfaction rating with the outcome of their participation in Vocational Rehabilitation.

2003 DDD-Statewide Quality Consortium Employment Survey

In 2004, the Developmental Disability's Statewide Quality Consortium surveyed 35 DD agencies about the number of people employed in community jobs. Thirty agencies provided the following information for each individual employed during 2003: Consumer ID, Employer Name, Job title, Hours worked, monthly income and employment type, i.e. Individual Supported Employment,* Group Supported Employment,** and Competitive Employment.*** (Types of employment were defined by the National Core Indicators/HSRI/CMS).

According to DDD/MHRH, 3,915 adults received services from them in 2003, of which approximately 3,365 received services from DD agencies.

The results of the employment survey show that 21% (699) of people receiving services from a DD agency held at least one job in 2003. 112 of those individuals reported having more than one job, for a total of 811 jobs. Ten individuals report as self-employed.

Individuals are reported as working in the following support categories:

- Individual Supported Employment - 252
- Group Supported Employment - 428

- Competitive Employment -131

Additionally, 80% or 648 jobs are less than 20 hours per week. 20% or 131 jobs are more than 20 hours per week, of which 4% or 30 jobs are full-time, 35 hours or more per week.

Throughout the state, employed individuals worked for 199 companies, in 35 job titles**** with an average hourly wage of \$7.14.

Core Indicator Definitions

*ISE - Called "Vocational-Supported Employment" in BI-28. Individuals have a job with a community employer and receive periodic publicly funded assistance, training and support aimed at securing and/or maintaining employment and /or improving job skills.

**Group SE - Called "Vocational-Group Employment" in BI-28. Two or more individuals are employed by a community provider agency and perform work as employees of the provider agency at sites in the community (e.g., mobile work crews). Group SE also includes persons who are employed in an affirmative industry or as part of an enclave.

***CE - This is not a service or support, therefore in not listed in BI-28. Individuals have a job of their own in the community but are not receiving "Supported Employment" - that is, they do to routinely receive community job supports or job coaching. They may have access to supports as needed or may receive follow-along but are basically working on their own.

**** 180 companies are identified as for-profit, non-profit, or state and city governments and 19 are DD organizations. Job titles with similar tasks were grouped together. For example, one grouping included housekeeper & cleaning worker; another included busboy, cafeteria aide, food service, and mess attendant. A total of six grouped job classifications are listed.

RI Governor's Commission on Disabilities

2004 Public Forum Employment Work Group

Themes and Recommendations

1. **Theme:** Not knowing what's available or where to find out about what's available e.g. tax credits.

Recommendations:

- a. Use the Able Too...program
- b. Expand RI.gov website
- c. Provide training - hands-on, website (but not printed materials – goes out of date to quickly)

2. **Theme:** Need for education of employers on abilities of the individuals with disabilities.

Recommendations:

- a. Provide training to employers
- b. Partnership to employers
- c. Success stories in local newspapers

3. **Themes:** Need for service provider skills/knowledge in job/person matching. Need for improved listening skills in service providers.

Recommendations:

- a. Individual skill inventory compared to available LMI
- b. Identify agency resources, needs, and funding requirement.
- c. (DLT – Labor Market Training)

4. **Theme:** Need for a case management system to assist the Traumatic Brain Injured become and maintain employment.

Recommendation:

- a. Legislative advocacy for funding

5. **Theme:** Communication barriers exist for people with disabilities securing interviews and successfully completing interviews.

Recommendation:

- a. Speech to Speech relay technology
- b. Educating employers on abilities

6. **Theme:** Need for equal access for the disabled including accommodations while in training and on the job.

Recommendations:

- a. Spread knowledge of JAN
- b. Develop/provide education effort focused on high school personnel to fade out reliance on others

- c. Use technology
- d. Focus on independent living to foster self-sufficiency

7. **Theme:** Need for Employers on the Governor's Commission on Disabilities

Recommendation:

- a. Employer representation on GCD

Rhodes to Independence Focus Groups Report Summary

In 2003, the Rhodes to Independence Steering Committee contracted with Cote & D'Ambrosio to develop a marketing plan. Cote & D'Ambrosio then conducted some focus group research to gather information and opinions about employment of people with disabilities. They conducted three focus groups: One for people with disabilities, one for families of people with disabilities, and one for employers. There is a considerable amount of overlap between the three groups, but the needs highlighted are:

- Need for volunteering and internship opportunities to gain experience for employment.
- Need for networking techniques to let people know that there looking for jobs.
- A need for good job leads.
- A need for adequate transportation.
- A need for employer understanding of assistive technology and related accommodations.
- A need for employer education on disability issues.
- A need for more readily accessible resources for employment, including for employers.

- A need for training of coworkers to offset negative attitudes towards people with disabilities in the workplace.
- In need for better preparation for work, including benefits counseling.
- A need to align the expectations of the employer and the person with the disability.
- A need for better coordination and communication between the various agencies and support staff.
- A need for better understanding regarding ADA laws.

After analysis and synthesis of the above-mentioned information, ORS has developed the 2005 Comprehensive Statewide Assessment which includes the following questions:

2005 ORS Comprehensive Needs Assessment Survey

Thank you for sharing your experience and expertise on the employment of people with disabilities through completing this survey. The survey results will be used by ORS and the SRC to enhance service delivery, resource development and training for the purpose of increasing employment of people with disabilities.

If you have any questions about the survey please contact Steve Brunero or Vicki Ferrara.

Return completed Survey in the enclosed self addressed stamped envelop by May 15, 2005. *Thank you!*

1. Please check the affiliation that best represents you.

ORS Counselor netWORKri/DLT staff

Community Rehabilitation Provider

What region of the state do you cover?

Statewide Aquidnick Island

East Bay

Metro/Providence

Northern RI

Southern RI

West Bay

2. What do people with disabilities seem to need when they first come to you seeking services?

2-A. Rank order the following:

2-B. Are services readily available?

a. Career counseling

a. yes no

b. Assessment/evaluation

b. yes no

c. Skills training/education

c. yes no

d. Development of an Employment Plan

d. yes no

e. Resume Services

e. yes no

f. Help to refine Interviewing skills

f. yes no

g. Support of a job developer

g. yes no

h. Support to maintain employment

h. yes no

3. Regarding job retention, from your experience, what most prevents people from maintaining employment?

Rank order the following:

a. Transportation

- b. Impact of earnings on Social Security Benefits
- c. Inappropriate job placement/match
- d. Inadequate of supervision
- e. Medical issues
- f. Lack of Job retention counseling
- g. Lack of job coaching
- h. Employer education/mediation
- i. Lack of Job accommodation
- j. Other _____

4. Consider your interaction with the following groups, from your experience, what gets in the way of successful employment of people with disabilities?

- a. Job seeker with disability-
- b. Employers-
- c. Co-workers-
- d. Vocational Counselors/professionals-
- e. Family of person with disabilities

5. What most gets in the way of successful employment for people with disabilities? Rank order

- _____ a. Transportation
- _____ b. Access to jobs
- _____ c. Availability of job development
- _____ d. Individual's expectations

_____ e. Individuals lack of skills

_____ f. Job search preparation

_____ g. other: _____

6. Are there sufficient community rehabilitation providers in your area to effectively serve the rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities for the purpose of preparing for, obtaining and maintaining employment?

___yes ___no If no, please describe what services are needed and geographic location.

7. Are there disability specific groups that Community Rehabilitation providers are not currently serving sufficiently? ___no ___yes

If yes, a. underserved group _____

b. geographic location _____

c. suggested service need _____

8. In the last 6 months, what netWORKri/DLT employment and/or training services have you used to assist a person with a disability?

___ LMI/RI Red website

___ Job Readiness Workshop(resume, interviewing)

___ Training grant

___ Placement assistance

___ Information/referral

___ OSESN ___ regional meeting ___ yahoo group

___ Job lead from DLT/Employer Service Rep

___ Other _____

9. Do you believe enough resources and time is devoted to job development for people with disabilities?

_____ yes _____ no If no, suggest a strategy for improvement.

10. As a professional, what do you need to be more effective to help people with disabilities to obtain and/or maintain employment?

11. State one suggestion, for each agency below, that could improve their ability to increase employment of people with disabilities.

ORS

NetWORKri

Community Rehabilitation Provider

12. In general, what suggestions do you have to improve employment outcomes of people with disabilities?

Please return to Steve Brunero by fax 401-222-3574 or mail to 40 Fountain Street, Providence, RI 02903

ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.12(b)

ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED

COSTS OF SERVICES (PROJECTIONS FOR FY2005

(1) Number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services under this State Plan:

ORS projects a goal of 2,000 new applicants in FFY2005, and 2,100 in FFY2006. Projected total number of eligible applicants in 2005 is 1,850, and in 2006 the projected total number if eligible applications is 1,900. In FFY 2004 there were 1,983 new applicants and 1,846 of these individuals were determined eligible. There were a total of 1,130 individuals who developed their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) in FFY 2004. The goal in FFY 2005 for new IPE's is 1,131.

(2) Number of individuals who will receive services under Title I and Title VI and numbers to be served in each order of selection priority category.

In FFY2006, projected total number of clients to be served under an Individualized Plan for Employment is 3,070, of which 100% are "most significant" and "significant" disabled. The total number of cases at the ORS is expected to exceed 5,000 cases.

Category 1 (Most significant disabilities)	2,303
Category 2 (Significant disabilities)	767

(3) Cost of services for projected total number of clients to be served, including service costs under each OOS category.

Average expenditure per client in FFY 2006 is estimated to be \$2,029

Total Cost of services for OOS category #1 are estimated at	\$4,672,787
Total Cost of services for OOS category #2 are estimated at	\$1,556,243
Total Cost of services for pre-OOS are estimated at	\$12,000

ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c) (1)

STATE’S GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The state’s goals and priorities are as follows:

- I. To increase employment outcomes by a minimum of five percent annually.
 - o ORS has increased the number of successful outcomes annually. Six hundred thirty-five (635) individuals were closed successfully employed in FFY2004, which was a 5% increase over FY2003. The goal for FFY2005 is six hundred thirty-six (636) successful outcomes. In FFY 2003 1,024 IPE’s were developed and in FFY2004 1,130 were developed, an increase of 8%. In FFY 2003, 1,453 individuals with disabilities were found eligible for services. In FFY 2004 1,846 individuals with disabilities were found eligible for services, an increase of 22%.
 - o In FFY 2004, the position of Workforce Development Supervisor has been filled. This was critical in expanding interaction with employers and understanding of the changing labor market. ORS has been involved at the national and regional level with a CSAVR initiative to share contacts with corporate headquarters of major employers. Thus direct contact and placements are occurring with companies with corporate headquarters in Rhode Island such as CVS and GTECH. In FFY 2005, interview workshops for customers has been initiated and are now held monthly in various parts of the state to improve customers presentation of the skills they have to offer and how to address any need for reasonable accommodations. ORS continues to exhibit at the Business Expo. The Workforce Development Supervisor has developed a liaison committee, with representatives from each Region. Involvement in local

- Chambers of Commerce has expanded with Regional Supervisors and Rehabilitation Counselors' participation. The Workforce Development Supervisor has initiated a resume writing workshop in partnership with the netWORKri One Stop System.
- Federal standards and indicators have been met successfully since FFY2003 and it is expected they will continue to be met in FFY2005. One hundred percent of those individuals competitively employed were significantly disabled. Close to 60% of individuals successfully employed reported their income as the largest single source of support at the time they applied for VR services.
 - The revised Employment Policy gives more direction to counselors on assisting customers develop a successful self-employment plan. Successful self-employment plans have been carried out with customers with significant mental health issues.
 - Two years of reviews of all individuals closed unsuccessful identified loss of contact due to moving with no forwarding address as a factor. With counselor vacancies filled it is expected that ongoing communications will be easier to maintain. Decreased time in determining eligibility is also expected to increase retention in the rehabilitation process. Regional supervisors continue with closer clinical supervision, including best practices in case management.
 - Coordinating and expanding employment opportunities for students as they transition from high school to post secondary activities continues to be a priority. ORS and RIDE have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) describing a shared vision and philosophy. A comprehensive services chart is a critical part of the MOU. The chart designates primary, shared, or minimal responsibility for service provision, resulting in more timely service provision to students. ORS has also entered into a Memorandum of

- Understanding with the three public Institutions of Higher Education to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to academic programs and other services provided by the IHE's. A second Transition Academy began operating in FFY2005.
- The School for the Deaf establishment grant which ends June, 2005 has successfully established transitioned funding for the position of Transition Coordinator to the School for the Deaf. Training in work incentives for students, parents and staff of School for the Deaf is occurring. The position of Supervisor of ORS Deaf Services has been filled. Current efforts focus on expanding work readiness and work experience for students. As part of that initiative, ORS held a job interviewing skills workshop for individuals who are deaf.
 - The Family Independence Learning Disability Project is expanding the pilot screening process from three to six DHS office locations, which will expedite the rehabilitation process.
 - Ticket to Work has been implemented. A protocol for ticket assignment was developed and implemented, staff training in the process was provided and a system established for handling inquiry calls.
 - Benefit planning has become an integral part of counseling and employment planning. All new counselors receive training. Meetings are held with individual customers and training is provided to community providers of service.
 - Newly hired counselors receive training in the philosophy and practice of informed choice. Informed choice is also emphasized by the CRP coordinator with all new vendors, for example the central role of the individual in self discovery and decision making. Fact sheets regarding informed choice and transportation planning are distributed widely.

II. To improve employment outcomes for supported employment

The MHRH pilot project Developmental Disabilities project encourages working more hours through an incentive payment process which provides a higher payment for successful employment outcomes over twenty hours a week. Benefits planning training with community vendors continues as a necessary aspect of increasing hours worked.

- III. To provide the necessary tools, training and learning opportunities to maintain a highly-skilled and high-performing workforce. CSPD progress is described in Attachment 4.11(b). Eighty-seven percent of counselors ~~have~~ and 100% of Supervisors have Masters Degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling.
- IV. To increase the service and employment outcome ratios for minority populations.
 - o ORS met Federal Standards on Standard Two Equal Access to Services by minorities in FFY 2002, 2003, 2004 and expects to continue to meet the standard. All forms have been updated in Spanish and are being updated in Portuguese. The ORS application has been revised to provide for multi-racial choices. ORS Fact Sheets have been distributed in Spanish and English to local libraries and some community agencies. Outreach to minority populations is ongoing, for example to both employers such as Black Contractors and Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and to community agencies providing services to minority populations. Rhode Island ORS is coordinating with the Connecticut 121 Project for Native Americans and is negotiating for a possible Projects with Industry focusing on employment for individuals from minority populations.
- V. To develop and enhance communication techniques and tools in order to ensure consistent quality of services through the expanded use of technology by staff to increase the consumer choice. Staff received training in use of Department of Labor and Training labor market information. Staff have

received training in use of internet resources. Updated computers and software are being provided to staff.

VI. To identify ways to enhance customer-friendly resource capability (in ORS Central Office and in netWORKri offices) and to:

- Eliminate barriers to access of all kinds
- Increase access to ORS resources for customers
- Develop and improve outreach and educational materials
- Ensure that all communication materials are in alternate formats
- Develop an efficient employer response system through partnerships with netWORKri and Community Rehabilitation Programs
- Expand ORS Home Page as an outreach, application, and employment resource and connector
- Coordinate presentations and orientations to ensure that message is consistent

VII. To work in partnership with SRC and other partners to identify areas of need

Two consumer satisfaction surveys have been completed. Over 1,600 consumer surveys were completed. SRC and ORS worked collaboratively to develop and implement the surveys. ORS is developing a statewide comprehensive needs assessment with input from the SRC to target CRP providers, netWORKri staff, and ORS counselors.

ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c)(2)(a)
ORDER OF SELECTION

Order of selection will continue throughout FFY2005 and FFY2006. All new clients with Individualized Plans for Employment are individuals with most significant or significant disabilities, requiring multiple services over an extended period. Vacancies due to retirement and promotions are expected to continue and require substantial training for the changed caseloads and new responsibilities.

Order of Selection Categories:

- 1.) Individuals with the most significant disabilities
- 2.) Individuals with significant disabilities.
- 3.) All other individuals with disabilities who cannot be classified in a higher category.

Priority to Individuals with the most significant disabilities

ORS assures that its Order of Selection policy gives first priority to individuals with the most significant disabilities, within a comprehensive, coordinated program that is designed to assist these individuals to prepare for, and engage in, gainful employment in an integrated setting. The Order of Selection does not discriminate by type of disability, economic status, or protected class.

State Definition of Individual with the most significant disability

The term “individual with the most significant disability” is defined as an individual

- who has a severe physical or mental disability that seriously limits three or more functional capacities (mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of employment outcome, and
- whose vocational rehabilitation is expected to require multiple VR services over an extended period of time, and
- who has one or more physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, mental retardation, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, musculoskeletal disorder, neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), paraplegia, quadraplegia, other spinal cord conditions, sickle cell anemia, specific learning disabilities, end-stage renal disease or from another disability or combination of disabilities which, based on an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs, causes comparable substantial functional limitation.

For the foreseeable future, ORS anticipates serving customers who meet the first two categories of the Order of Selection. Nonetheless, during FFY 2006 an in-house order of selection committee will consider the appropriateness of serving eligible individuals on the Category 3 waitlist.

While ORS seeks additional resources to enable it to serve all eligible applicants, it has developed a method to assure that all persons assigned to the wait list (Category 3) receive information and referral services.

Projections for numbers to be served in FFY2006 are based on recent performance:

OOS Category 1: 2,070

OOS Category 2: 767

ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c) (3)

GOALS AND PLANS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI, PART B, FUNDS

Title VI, Part B provides \$300,000 of federal funding annually. These funds continue to be distributed through the fee-for-service basis with the emphasis on individually-planned services and outcome based payments. Ninety-four individuals received supported employment services through seventeen supported employment vendors. Due to supported employment vendors' staff turnover, ongoing training and technical assistance have been necessary. The Community Rehabilitation Program Specialist, Regional Supervisors and counselors all participate in this training and technical assistance.

New patterns of service have been initiated for FFY 2005, FFY 2006 (see Attachment 7.3 for detailed information).

ORS expects that the above-stated goals will be met upon completion of the federal fiscal year.

ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12 (d)

STATE STRATEGIES FOR TITLE 1 FUNDS FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION

In FFY 2005, Innovation and Expansion (I & E) funds were utilized to fund activities and projects of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The SRC staff person has been assisting the Council with organizational duties, research activities, and other on-going projects. This position is funded annually in the amount of twenty-seven thousand dollars with I & E funds. The I & E authority is also utilized to fund the Annual Employer Honor Roll hosted by the SRC and ORS. These activities will be carried forth to FFY 2006 also with I & E funds.

I & E funds were utilized in FFY 2005 for the “Partnership to Employment” conference to help individuals with disabilities learn about employment options.

I & E funds are being utilized for a program at the RI School for the Deaf. (It is currently in the final year of funding FFY 2005). The students served by the RISD have an increased need for transition services. Consequently, in FFY 2006, ORS is planning to fund additional transition services to this population. A new two-strand program of services including one strand focusing on students within approximately two years of graduation for an in depth internship and prep program. The other strand is a summer work program designed for younger students aged 15 – 17 years old.

Program activities will include career exploration, career development and community-based work experiences.

In FFY 2005, I & E funds were utilized for two new programs with the regional educational collaboratives, and ORS to expand vocational services to students in transition who may require additional assistance in securing and maintaining employment. Job development, job placement, and time-limited job coaching services (which are not currently provided under the existing cooperative agreement) are available through the use of I & E funds.

In FFY 2006, a third program will be established with another regional educational center.

I & E funds have been utilized for the ORS sponsored Youth Leadership Forum to build leadership skills and potential in youth with disabilities who are transitioning to adult life. ORS and other community-based organizations, the Regional Transition Coordinators, School Guidance Counselors, and others are working collaboratively to recruit suitable candidates for the FFY 2005 Forum. It is anticipated that a Youth Forum will take place in FFY 2006.

ORS continues to monitor and develop program needs to improve standards and indicators.

ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12(d) (1)

**TO ADDRESS NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN THE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT AND TO
ACHIEVE IDENTIFIED GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

ORS activities implemented to address needs determined through the Consumer Satisfaction Surveys and other surveys and assessments in which ORS was a partner are described below.

WIA and One-Stop System: ORS staff actively participates in State and Local Workforce Investment Boards and Youth Councils. ORS has partnered with the One-Stop staff in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, offering job-seeking skills workshops for limited English speaking consumers.

ORS is represented and actively involved in both WIA Youth Councils, and involved in the RFP and grant review process to ensure access opportunities for youth with disabilities.

Informed Choice and Resource Development: ORS and the SRC have continued to focus on informed choice during FFY 2005. Consumer-friendly information that includes Fact Sheets and decision-making guides have been, and continue to be, developed or revised and included on the ORS website. Links on the homepage to training resources that have been approved by the DHS and netWORKri system will improve choice. ORS electronic systems have organized vendors according to geographic regions in order for Counselors to assist customers with local resources. The Community Rehabilitation Program Specialist has developed new resources both in the CRP area, including enhancing the provision of supported employment services to deaf individuals and other individuals with significant disabilities, and with short-term training and ESL programs to improve services to culturally diverse customers. The CRP Specialist has

developed a “Vendor Report Card” to provide additional information necessary for ORS customers to make informed decisions about service providers. The Agency's Fee Schedule has been revised to be an improved tool for person-centered planning and informed choices for customers. The Fee Schedule can be accessed at the ORS website. The ORS Information Services Technician has installed JAWS software in order to ensure that written material is readable to individuals with visual disabilities.

Resource Enhancement for Blind and Visually Impaired: Increasing Competitive Employment through Outreach. The focus of FFY 2005 and FFY 2006 will be outreach to those individuals who are legally visually impaired and who are not mandated to be referred to the agency because their diagnosis is not “legally blind”. The Staff at SBVI are developing a “bookmark” that can be left at the offices of ophthalmologists and optometrists. Each member of the vocational rehabilitation team will meet with these specialists and explain the benefits of services through SBVI. A joint meeting will be held with representatives from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) to review all students with visual impairments who are 14 or older and their possible referral to the vocational rehabilitation program at SBVI. A member of the vocational rehabilitation team will meet with all other vocational rehabilitation units in the general agency to discuss visual disabilities and services that SBVI can provide. A meeting will be held with Library Services to look at ways to increase their referrals to the SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Unit. The SBVI vocational rehabilitation team will also do outreach to rehabilitation facilities, hospitals, pharmacies, college disability offices and college financial aid offices. Bookmarks will also be provided to libraries and bookstores. In an effort to increase competitive employment outcomes for minorities, outreach will also be conducted to the Urban League, Progreso Latino, interpreting services and inner city health facilities, i.e. walk in clinics.

In addition, the Career Assessment Center at SBVI continues to be developed by staff in order to maximize the ways it can be used to assist VR clients achieve vocational goals. A variety of adaptive equipment is available for loan to customers of the agency. In addition new computers allow customers to search for jobs on the Internet using screen enlargement software or JAWS, develop resumes and or improve skills.

Transition Planning: Transition is a high priority for the ORS and the SRC.

ORS provides coordinated technical assistance to school systems by participating in regional Transition Advisory Committees and in Leadership Workshops sponsored by the RIDE. Consultation evaluation and community-based employment planning services are provided to students in coordination with the School districts and the regional Transition Centers. Throughout FFY 2005, the Assistant Administrator/Transition Coordinator met with ORS Transition Counselors to disseminate information and focus on problem-resolution where necessary to improve service provision.

The RIDE Transition Coordinator also attends these meetings regularly to ensure that communication is fostered between ORS and the RIDE.

Two Transition Academies are now functioning in geographic regions of the state. These programs were established in order to expand the provision of vocational assessment and job development services for students with disabilities between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one who have not yet completed their IEP and who do not want to remain in a high school setting. One of the Transition Academies is housed at the Community College of RI. The second Transition Academy is located at Salve Regina University in

Newport. In FFY 2006, a third transition academy has been proposed in another geographic area in the State. ORS will expand its fee for services relationship to this new program.

In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding between DHS/ORS and RIDE was finalized in FFY 2005. This document describes a shared vision of service delivery to students with disabilities. It also provides a comprehensive list of collaborative service provision that designates primary, minimal, or shared responsibility, thus clarifying roles and leading to more timely service delivery.

In FFY 2005 ORS has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the three public Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) describing roles and responsibilities to ensure full inclusion in academic programs and other activities and services provided by the IHE's.

Job-seeking skills workshops are being conducted in one of the geographic regions of the State for students in transition. ORS counselors are conducting the workshops for their customers, which includes practice interviewing, resume writing, etc.

Both third-party cooperative agreements with RI Department of Education (RIDE) and MHRH are coordinated together with focus on services for transitioning students.

Employment Options: A new employment policy was implemented with assistance from the State Rehabilitation Council and the RI Disability Law Center addressing self-employment options for customers of the ORS. Training on this policy was conducted for all ORS counselors in FFY 2005.

The ORS Supervisor for Planning continues to consult with ORS counselors whenever necessary to review business plans for self-employment. A Self-Employment Fact Sheet and worldwide web links to resources through the ORS web site have been implemented.

OJT is encouraged, where appropriate, for potential job-ready individuals. WIA on-the-job training monies have been accessed to enhance the opportunity to obtain employment of the individual's choice.

TANF: The FIP/RI Learning Disabilities Project continues to be nationally recognized as a best practices program that assists individuals with learning disabilities to become economically self-sufficient. There have been many inquiries from individuals in other states as to the availability of services in other states.

The pilot project was successful in three offices thus the DHS Associate Director for Field Operations has authorized the expansion of the program to two more offices. At this time the staffs of both of these new offices have been trained and are prepared to assist customer's access ORS services. It is expected that in three months, the Learning Disabilities Project will expand to all DHS offices.

Training of ORS and DHS staff is ongoing. In FFY 2005, an in-service was provided to ORS to address more specific questions about the Family Independence Program This is supplemented by the LD liaison to DHS who offers instruction to coworkers as to policy and procedures. There have been several requests from DHS to train new staff in the new procedures.

Applications for ORS services and the learning needs screening tools are being used routinely by social workers who assist the customer to access services. In the past year, 100% of the individuals referred to ORS through the LD liaison have been determined eligible. Of those referred in the pilot project areas 90% were found to have learning disabilities. Of those who were referred from other areas not using the learning needs screening tool only 29% were found to have learning disabilities.

In FFY 2004 there were 95 referrals to the LD liaison resulting in 85 applications. Of open cases 51 resulted in eligibility/work plans. There were 22 successful closures due to employment.

The resource guide has been updated and new resources added to it to address learning disabilities. The information generated by ORS has been disseminated throughout the state.

The video was created in conjunction with National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) in order to train staff regarding educational and employment needs of individuals on TANF.

Transportation: The Office of Rehabilitation Services and the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) are working together along with other state and local agencies to improve transportation options for the purpose of employment to those individuals with disabilities. A new public transportation system, Flex Service, was implemented in the most rural areas of the state. Flex Zones are geographically limited areas of service that may overlap fixed route services and the accompanying ADA paratransit service. Flex service provides curb-to-curb, and reservation-based service mixed with scheduled bus stops. The Work Link Pilot Project provides priority trips for employment in all flex service zones. Since its implementation, Flex Service has consistently expanded both in the number of zones it services, and the amount of trips

taken per day. For SFY 2004, the amount of trips per day year rose to 59,927. An access to opportunity committee has been created to ensure that the flex zones are periodically reviewed. Specifically, flex zones are continuously monitored for an increase in ridership, and for the need of expanding zones. A transportation option fact sheet was developed for distribution to both customers and staff to assist in career planning. In FFY 2005, a representative from RIPTA is providing updated transportation information to ORS counselors. A mobility assessment will be added to the vocational assessments for students with disabilities being served through the Regional vocational Assessment Centers within the Regional Educational Collaboratives.

Cultural Diversity Outreach: The Cultural Diversity Cadre continues to develop and recommend action steps to provide quality services with positive outcome to cultural diverse clientele. In FFY 2004 and continuing in FFY 2005, the Cultural Diversity Cadre is assisting in the development and presentation of training to ORS counselors on the impact of cultural issues on the rehabilitation process to build better understanding and improved relationship with targeted ethnic/racial communities. Under resource enhancements above, the expansion of programs that ORS customers can access is addressed. ORS counselors now provide orientation programs to consumers in Spanish in both Providence and Pawtucket One-Stops. ORS has also installed an AT & T Language Line ® services for communication in 137 languages.

ORS is collaborating with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Program, which is conducting disability research of the Narragansett Tribal Nation and making referrals of Native Americans living throughout RI to ORS.

ORS staff is participating in the newly formed Diversity workgroup of the Rhodes to Independence Steering Committee. Participants of this workgroup are consumers and agencies successfully providing services representative of traditionally underserved populations. Tentative goals include working with representatives of minority communities to identify and develop strategies to facilitate system change to overcome barriers to employment for individuals from targeted ethnic/racial backgrounds.

Mediation Update: Since the start of FFY 2005 to the present there have been two new requests for Mediation and no pending requests remaining from FFY 2004. The most recent Mediation was requested on February 11, 2005 and was scheduled to be heard on March 9, 2005. However the ORS customer contacted the agency and requested that the Mediation be rescheduled due to the fact he could not secure a ride on that date. The Mediation was rescheduled for March 29, 2005. The customer agreed to attend on that date. The only other Mediation was requested on November 17, 2004. The customer requested both Mediation and an Administrative hearing. The case was originally scheduled for Mediation on December 17, 2004, however the Mediator had to reschedule the session for December 23, 2004 and the customer agreed to attend on that date. An agreement was reached at the Mediation and the customer withdrew his request for an Administration Hearing.

Besides the Agency's Comprehensive Needs Assessment, ORS is a sponsor of annual public forums for individuals with disabilities and their families. Comments from the forums are compiled and analyzed. ORS has incorporated these expressed issues into our priorities. Comprehensive health care, affordable housing, and employment and transition services continue to be of the utmost importance.

Medicaid Buy-In legislation was passed into law during FFY 2004. A ceremonial signing of the legislation by the Governor took place at the ORS Annual Employer Honor Roll. It will afford individuals with disabilities the opportunity to purchase Medicaid as their medical coverage enabling them to secure employment, while maintaining the medical services necessary to function independently. The law will take effect in January, 2006.

The availability of accessible, affordable housing remains a high priority for the disability community. ORS is working collaboratively with one of the IL Centers to increase awareness of the “Home Choice” initiative. This program makes the purchase of or modification of a home more affordable for persons with disabilities. In FFY 2005, information sessions have been conducted for parents of ORS customers at the educational collaboratives about this topic.

ORS initiatives related to transition services for students with disabilities, and transportation have been described.

In FFY 2005, ORS developed a Cooperative Agreement with the Veterans Administration to implement a collaborative program of service-delivery to veterans with service-connected disabilities.

ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12(d)(2)

**TO CARRY OUT OUTREACH ACTIVITIES TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH
THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES**

In FFY 2005, ORS has been actively seeking to expand resources to provide access to services for customers of linguistic minorities, since outreach must be balanced with expanded capacity to assist individuals to reach employment outcomes.

An active effort is occurring to identify, catalogue and utilize all resources with bilingual capacity, including ESL, GED and specialized computer training.

In FFY 2005, a plan to connect with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce was implemented. An effort will be made to expand on the job training opportunities. Goodwill Industries has expanded their bilingual job development staff. Practice interviewing is being planned for Spanish speaking customers of ORS with the assistance of interpreters.

The Cultural Diversity Cadre is assisting in the development and presentation of training to ORS counselors on the impact of cultural issues on the rehabilitation process to build better understanding and improved relationship with targeted ethnic/racial communities. ORS counselors now provide orientation programs to consumers in Spanish in both Providence and Pawtucket One-Stops. ORS has also installed an AT & T Language Line ® services for communication in 137 languages. New staff will be provided training in effective communication, including the use of the AT&T translation line, how to utilize interpreters, and available resources.

ORS is collaborating with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Program which is conducting disability research of the Narragansett Tribal Nation and making referrals of Native Americans living throughout RI to ORS.

Application packets are available in Spanish for individuals with disabilities wishing to apply for vocational rehabilitation services through ORS. In addition, other ORS documents are being translated into other foreign languages, as needed. ORS utilizes a bilingual psychologist who can provide assessments for customers with possible learning disabilities who are Spanish speaking.

ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4. 12 (d) (3)

TO OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM

The Update for this section includes the updates in 4.12 (a), 4.12 (c) (1), 4.12 (d), (d) (1), (d) (2). Barriers related to benefits planning, transportation, informed choice, cultural barriers, employment options, and options for individuals with sensory impairments have been previously addressed in other sections of the Annual Update to the State Plan.

ORS has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (finalized in FFY 2005) with the three public Institutions of Higher Education (IHE). The MOU describes the roles and responsibilities of each to ensure access for individuals with disabilities, including interpreters for the deaf, to academic and other programs of the IHE's.

The Commission on The Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CDHH) has the responsibility for the interpreter referral service statewide. The ORS authorizes interpreter services through the CDHH. In addition, to ensure access, a Master Price Agreement (MPA) with Allied CART Reporting Services provided added access for customers and staff who are deaf and hard of hearing.

ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12(e)

**EVALUATION AND REPORT OF PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING IDENTIFIED GOALS AND
PRIORITIES AND USE OF TITLE I FUNDS FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION**

In FFY 2005, the Workforce Development supervisor targeted a number of priority areas on which to focus, including:

- Increase outreach to employers
- Market ORS to the business community as a work placement resource with solutions including recruitment and retention needs
- Institute regional interviewing workshops
- Institute regional liaisons for employment issues
- Institute strategies that will increase number of quality competitive placements
- Develop a job club
- Re-organize Business Advisory Board
- Continue to post quality job openings
- Continue to provide useable employment information to staff as well as being a in-house resource for them
- Continue to assist certain ORS customers with their job search activities
- Institute resume-writing workshops for ORS clients

In addition, other ORS employment activities include outreach to employers and new referral sources in each region. ORS staff have joined several Chambers of Commerce in geographic areas of the state. Chamber memberships provide opportunities to interact with employers there and to provide

education about the vocational rehabilitation services program. Each region also has a designated employment point person who is helping with job development and working closely with the ORS Workforce Development Supervisor to coordinate the agency's employment efforts. ORS contacts with netWORKri offices remain very beneficial in assisting customers with their job search.

ORS has two benefits planning specialists. Approximately 300 customers were served in FFY 2004 and anticipate serving a similar amount this year. Information provided by the benefits specialists enables people to make informed decisions about work. This is reflected in increased employment plans. Regional liaisons have been appointed to help with intra-regional questions related to benefits issues.

In FFY 2005, ORS has contracted with an agency which provides services to individuals of cultural and linguistic diversity to translate all relevant ORS documents into foreign languages that will meet the needs of ORS customers who are non-English speaking. This will be an on-going effort, as documents are amended or updated. Fact sheets on consumer choice for transportation, training, and IPE development were implemented. Counselors are more aware of offering consumers choices. The ORS CRP Specialist developed a "vendor report card" to share with our customers so they can review, compare, and make their vendor and service selections with pertinent information.

The FIP Learning Disabilities Project continues to provide vocational rehabilitation and case management services collaboratively with DHS personnel. ORS has assigned additional staff to work with FIP field office staff. Procedures are in place for FIP social workers to work closely in partnership with ORS counselors especially with enforcing agreed upon evaluations and plans.

Two Transition Academies are now functioning in geographic regions of the state. These programs were established in order to expand the provision of vocational assessment and job development services for students with disabilities between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one who have not yet completed their IEP and who do not want to remain in a high school setting. One of the Transition Academies is housed at the Community College of RI. In FFY 2005, there are fourteen students participating in the program. The second Transition Academy is located at Salve Regina University in Newport. Five students are attending this program. In FFY 2006, a third transition academy may open in another geographic area in the State. ORS will expand its fee for services relationship to this new program.

The Regional Vocational Assessment Centers are continuing to provide career exploration, vocational assessments, and community-based situational assessments for ORS eligible students under a contractual agreement between the ORS and the Regional educational collaboratives. These contracts are being renewed for an additional four year period, beginning in FFY 2006.

The CSPD goals have been fully described in 4.11 (b).

ORS Counselors are trained, in partnership with netWORKri, in accessing current Labor Market Information, use of O*Net and Career Scope to assist consumers analyze their interests and skills. In addition, counselors have access to other tools available through the internet to assist consumers to make informed career choices.

The fifth Bi-Annual Partnerships to Employment Conference took place in FFY 2005. The conference offered numerous workshops related to employment trends, job opportunities, and linkages to

the business community. Also, as a feature of the conference, a one-day program was offered on job development skills for professionals. This collaboratively planned and implemented conference brings together ORS staff, Human Resource Specialists, job seekers with disabilities, school to career personnel, and other interested individuals to learn about a wide range of employment related topics. The conference will be scheduled again in FFY 2007.

I & E funds are being utilized for a program at the RI School for the Deaf. (It is currently in the final year of funding FFY 2005). The students served by the RISD have an increased need for Transition services. Consequently, in FFY 2006, ORS is planning to fund additional transition services to this population. A new two-strand program of services including one strand focusing on students within approximately two years of graduation for an in depth internship and prep program. The other strand is a summer work program designed for younger students aged 15 – 17 years old.

Program activities will include career exploration, career development and community-based work experiences. Many of the students are also from culturally diverse populations. This new service option will provide quality and timely services to better meet the employment preparation needs of students transitioning from high school, who are deaf.

I & E funds are also being utilized again in FFY 2005 for the ORS sponsored Youth Leadership Forum. YLF is in its fourth year, and has provided training to approximately thirty students to date. This year we anticipate working with another 10 -15 students on development of leadership skills, self-advocacy skills, and vocational exploration and life planning activities. Delegates from past years participate as peer counselors.

In FFY 2005, I & E funds were earmarked for the enhancement of the SRC partnership. These funds support the role of the staff person to the SRC. The responsibilities of the staff person include facilitating communications among the Committees of the Council, research, and other on-going projects. SRC Leadership development activities were also funded via I and E.

ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 7.3

QUALITY, SCOPE AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Supported employment continues to be an important option for individuals with the most significant disabilities. For FFY 2004, five hundred and five (505) individuals received Supported Employment services from the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) in partnership with Community Rehabilitation Program providers. Of that number, one hundred forty-seven (147) individuals achieved a successful employment outcome that is, competitively employed in an integrated setting.

FFY 2005, to date five hundred fifty-three (553) individuals are being served, with eighty (80) individuals achieving successful competitive employment.

The Community Rehabilitation Program Specialist and assigned ORS staff continue to be an active partner in both Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Supported Employment Advisory Councils. The Councils focus on exploring employment strategies and methods of tracking outcomes, which will lead to quality employment while focusing on the needs of individuals with mental illness and those with developmental disabilities. Both advisory councils emphasize facilitating quality employment opportunities.

In FFY 2004, there were thirty-one (31) successful employment outcomes achieved under the Supported Employment Pilot project. Tracking data indicates that the process of service delivery has been streamlined, lending itself to more efficient planning. CRP providers involved in the pilot project are sharing employment/training information and other resources at regularly scheduled meetings.

Due to the nature of this new system of Supported Employment being a performance measured, outcome-based payment structure, the participating vendors are emphasizing customer-centered planning referring individuals who are highly motivated, thereby most likely to obtain and maintain employment.

The “Business to Business” venture started in FFY 2004. The idea grew out of the need to maximize an individual’s potential to move from one place of employment to another when he/she has mastered the skills necessary to advance via a “career ladder”. One employer has been authorized by ORS to do job development. Pending a review of FFY 2005 results, other employers may be authorized as well.

ORS continues to develop strategies for increased options for the provision of extended services for customers engaged in Supported Employment. Natural supports are encouraged whenever possible. The Cooperative Agreement between the Department of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals (MHRH) and DHS/Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) describes the commitment of the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Division of Behavioral Health Services to provide extended services to Supported Employment customers. This is mirrored in the Cooperative Agreement with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) , as well. ORS counselors, their customers, and the Supported Employment provider mutually agree upon the transition period from ORS support to extended services. The level of job skills, work behaviors and general stability to be achieved, as described in the customer’s IPE are the determining factors on the timing of transition to extended services.

For individuals with disabilities who do not achieve a successful employment outcome with supports, ORS counselors may continue to work with them to determine what barriers may exist to achieve their stated employment goal, and, if necessary, amend the IPE to address identified obstacles.