

Rhode Island  
Department of Human Services  
Office of Rehabilitation Services

ANNUAL UPDATE

FFY2005

STATE PLAN

for

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION  
SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

2001 – 2006

Raymond A. Carroll  
Administrator





M. Dybala  
R. Carrall <sup>ORS</sup>

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES  
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

September 27, 2004

Ronald A. Lebel, Acting Director  
Department of Human Services  
600 New London Avenue  
Cranston, Rhode Island 02920

Dear Ron:

This is to inform you that we have completed our review of the following Attachments to the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services' (ORS') Title I State plan and Title VI, Part B supplement, which were transmitted to our office on June 30, 2004.

- 4.2(c) Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; and Explanation for Rejection of Input or Recommendations;
- 4.9(c)(4) Evidence of Collaboration Regarding Supported Employment Services and Extended Services;
- 4.11(b) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development;
- 4.12(b) Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Costs of Services;
- 4.12(c)(2)(A) Order Of Selection;
- 4.12(c)(3) Assessments; Annual Estimates; Goals and Priorities; Strategies; and Reports Of Progress;
- 4.12(d) State's Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities;
- 4.12(e) Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion (I&E) Activities; and
- 7.3 Quality, Scope and Extent of Supported Employment Services;

**DELIVERED OCT - 1 2004**

J.W. McCORMACK POST OFFICE & COURT HOUSE, ROOM 502, BOSTON, MA 02109  
www.ed.gov

We are pleased to advise you that these attachments are hereby approved, effective October 1, 2004.

We also appreciate receiving the updated information related to ORS' ongoing needs assessment and corresponding program goals (Attachments 4.12(a) and 4.12(c)(11)). We understand that ORS intends to submit the results of its next full comprehensive needs assessment, and corresponding goals and strategies, as part of your agency's State plan updates for FY 2006. As always, we are available to provide you and your staff any needed technical assistance in ensuring that your assessment and planning efforts are effective and address applicable State plan requirements.

We have forwarded copies of the approved attachments to the Rehabilitation Services Administration Central Office. Copies will be retained in this Regional Office, and copies are enclosed for your files.

We appreciate the timely submittal of the necessary information. Any questions pertaining to our approval may be directed to Maryanne Langton at 617-223-4094.

Sincerely



Allen Kropp  
RSA Regional Commissioner

Enclosure

cc: Chairperson, State Rehabilitation Council

*State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*



**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
*Office of the Director*

June 30, 2004

Mr. Allen Kropp, Regional Commissioner  
U.S. Department of Education, OSERS  
Rehabilitation Services Administration  
J.W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse, Room 502  
Boston, MA 02109

RE: Transmittal of the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services Annual State Plan FY2005 update for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program under Title I, Part B and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program under Title VI, Part B of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended

Dear Mr. Kropp:

The purpose of this correspondence is to submit for approval the original and two copies of the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services Annual State Plan FY2005 updates for the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the State Plan for Supported Employment. The State Rehabilitation Council assisted the Designated State Unit (DSU) in the development of the State Plan update. The effective date for the Annual Update to the State Plan is October 1, 2004.

The enclosed required narrative attachment and assurances are included with this letter.

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Attachment 4.2 (c):</b>   | Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; and Explanations for Rejection of Input or recommendations |
| <b>Attachment 4.9(c)(4):</b> | Evidence of Collaboration Regarding Supported Employment Services and Extended Services   |
| <b>Attachment 4.11(b):</b>   | Comprehensive System of Personnel Development   |
| <b>Attachment 4.12:</b>      | Assessments; Estimates; Goals and Priorities; Strategies; and Progress Reports  |

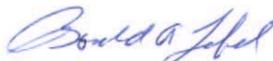
- (a): Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities and Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs
- (b): Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Costs of Services
- (c)(1) State's Goals and Priorities
- (c)(2)(A): Order of Selection
- (c)(3): Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds
- (d): State's Strategies and use of Title I funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities
  - (d)(1): To Address Needs Identified in the Comprehensive Assessment and to Achieve Identified Goals and Priorities
  - (d)(2): To Carryout Outreach Activities to Identify and Serve Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities Who Are Minorities
  - (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
- (e): Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

**Attachment 7.3:** Quality, Scope and Extent of Supported Employment Services

The State Plan and its Supplement are not subject to the State Single Point of Contact review process.

If you should have any questions or require additional information, please contact Raymond A. Carroll, Administrator, Office of Rehabilitation Services at (401) 421-7005 Ext. 301. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Ronald A. Lebel  
Acting Director

**CERTIFICATIONS REGARDING LOBBYING; DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS, AND DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE REQUIREMENTS**

Applicants should refer to the regulations cited below to determine the certification to which they are required to attest. Applicants should also review the instructions for certification included in the regulations before completing this form. Signature of this form provides for compliance with certification requirements under 34 CFR Part 82, "New Restrictions on Lobbying," and 34 CFR Part 85, "Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and Government-wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants)." The certifications shall be treated as a material representation of fact upon which reliance will be placed when the Department of Education determines to award the covered transaction, grant, or cooperative agreement.

**1. LOBBYING**

As required by Section 1352, Title 31 of the U.S. Code, and implemented at 34 CFR Part 82, for persons entering into a grant or cooperative agreement over \$100,000, as defined at 34 CFR Part 82, Sections 82.105 and 82.110, the applicant certifies that:

(a) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the making of any Federal grant, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal grant or cooperative agreement;

(b) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal grant or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form - LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," in accordance with its instructions;

(c) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subgrants, contracts under grants and cooperative agreements, and subcontracts) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly.

**2. DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION, AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS**

As required by Executive Order 12549, Debarment and Suspension, and implemented at 34 CFR Part 85, for prospective participants in primary covered transactions, as defined at 34 CFR Part 85, Sections 85.105 and 85.110—

A. The applicant certifies that it and its principals:

(a) Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from covered transactions by any Federal department or agency;

(b) Have not within a three-year period preceding this application been convicted of or had a civil judgement rendered against them for commission of fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (Federal, State, or local) transaction or contract under a public transaction; violation of Federal or State antitrust statutes or commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property;

(c) Are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State, or local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated in paragraph (2)(b) of this certification; and

(d) Have not within a three-year period preceding this application had one or more public transactions (Federal, State, or local) terminated for cause or default; and

B. Where the applicant is unable to certify to any of the statements in this certification, he or she shall attach an explanation to this application.

**3. DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (GRANTEES OTHER THAN INDIVIDUALS)**

As required by the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, and implemented at 34 CFR Part 85, Subpart F, for grantees, as defined at 34 CFR Part 85, Sections 85.605 and 85.610 -

A. The applicant certifies that it will or will continue to provide a drug-free workplace by:

(a) Publishing a statement notifying employees that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance is prohibited in the grantee's workplace and specifying the actions that will be taken against employees for violation of such prohibition;

(b) Establishing an on-going drug-free awareness program to inform employees about:

(1) The dangers of drug abuse in the workplace;

(2) The grantee's policy of maintaining a drug-free workplace;

(3) Any available drug counseling, rehabilitation, and employee assistance programs; and

(4) The penalties that may be imposed upon employees for drug abuse violations occurring in the workplace;

(c) Making it a requirement that each employee to be engaged in the performance of the grant be given a copy of the statement required by paragraph (a);

(d) Notifying the employee in the statement required by paragraph (a) that as a condition of employment under the grant, the employee will:

(1) Abide by the terms of the statement; and

(2) Notify the employer in writing of his or her conviction for a violation of a criminal drug statute occurring in the workplace no later than five calendar days after such conviction;

(e) Notifying the agency, in writing, within 10 calendar days after receiving notice under subparagraph (d)(2) from an employee or otherwise receiving actual notice of such conviction. Employers of convicted employees must provide notice, including position title, to: Director, Grants Policy and Oversight Staff, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W. (Room 3652, GSA Regional Office Building No. 3), Washington, DC 20202-4248. Notice shall include the identification number(s) of each affected grant;

(f) Taking one of the following actions, within 30 calendar days of receiving notice under subparagraph (d)(2), with respect to any employee who is so convicted:

(1) Taking appropriate personnel action against such an employee, up to and including termination, consistent with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; or

(2) Requiring such employee to participate satisfactorily in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a Federal, State, or local health, law enforcement, or other appropriate agency;

(g) Making a good faith effort to continue to maintain a drug-free workplace through implementation of paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), and (f).

B. The grantee may insert in the space provided below the site(s) for the performance of work done in connection with the specific grant:

Place of Performance (Street address, city, county, state, zip code)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Check  if there are workplaces on file that are not identified here.

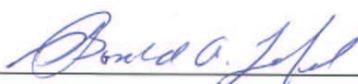
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(GRANTEES WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS)**

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B. If convicted of a criminal drug offense resulting from a violation occurring during the conduct of any grant activity, I will report the conviction, in writing, within 10 calendar days of the conviction, to: Director, Grants Policy and Oversight Staff, Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W. (Room 3652, GSA Regional Office Building No. 3), Washington, DC 20202-4248. Notice shall include the identification number(s) of each affected grant.

As the duly authorized representative of the applicant, I hereby certify that the applicant will comply with the above certifications.

NAME OF APPLICANT RI Department of Human Services Office of Rehabilitation Services	PR/AWARD NUMBER AND / OR PROJECT NAME Supported Employment H187A040059C
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE Ronald A. Lebel, Acting Director	
SIGNATURE 	DATE 06-30-04

**CERTIFICATIONS REGARDING LOBBYING; DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS; AND DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE REQUIREMENTS**

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As the duly authorized representative of the applicant, I hereby certify that the applicant will comply with the above certifications.

NAME OF APPLICANT RI Department of Human Services Office of Rehabilitation Services	PR/AWARD NUMBER AND / OR PROJECT NAME Vocational Rehabilitation - Basic Support H126A040058C
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE Ronald A. Lebel, Acting Director	
SIGNATURE 	DATE 06-30-04

**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 2005. The SRC is a valued partner in fulfilling the mission of the vocational rehabilitation program - successful 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 SRC has continued to work with ORS in the development of and implementation of two Consumer Satisfaction Surveys completed in 2002 and 2003 by the Center for Research and Public Policy. These surveys, along with the 2004 New England Consumer Satisfaction Survey have been completed. The members of the SRC have viewed a Powerpoint presentation and received a print copy of the results of the surveys. Members of the SRC will be working with ORS staff members as part of a customer satisfaction review team which will highlight results from the survey and identify focus areas for the coming year.

The SRC continues to meet on a quarterly basis, while Committees of the SRC meet monthly to work on specific activities.

**State Plan And Policy Committee:**

The Committee met to review the annual updates to the State Plan and to provide input and recommendations regarding ORS policy revisions. Several members of the

Committee were new to the work of the Council, so much time was devoted to their education before they were able to provide meaningful input. They have, however, provided valuable comments and recommendations relative to policy development, including a new policy on the provision of Transition Services which were incorporated into the policy.

Legislation/Advocacy Committee:

The Legislation/Advocacy committee concentrated their efforts on collaboration with the Governor's Commission on Disabilities in the sponsorship of a series of annual Public Forums on the concerns of people with disabilities held around the State during the last week of July. This has been an excellent opportunity to learn about issues of concern for the disability community, and to promote the awareness of the SRC as well as the value of vocational rehabilitation services.

The Committee also advocated on behalf of passage of a Medicaid Buy-in Bill for Rhode Islanders with disabilities who want to work, but who need to maintain the services funded by Medicaid. The ORS has been an advocate of such a program for many years, and is appreciative of the role of the SRC in advocating for its passage. Through the efforts of the SRC and other advocacy groups, a Medicaid Buy-in Bill was passed during the SFY 2004 legislative session.

Employment Committee:

ORS and the Employment Committee formed the SRC/ORS Employment Focus Team to work on employment unit strategy. Some of the goals of this unit have been to take advantage of the transition in the employment unit to evaluate its direction and operation; and to develop a strategic plan for employment and job development-related activities, setting ORS up to be a resource for businesses that would consider hiring an employee with a disability.

In addition, the SRC/ORS Employment Focus Team has made valuable recommendations regarding providing additional training for staff in job development and employment-related activities; development of a data base of employer contacts and development of a data collection system to evaluate effectiveness of efforts. The new ORS Workforce Development Supervisor and other staff have begun to implement these recommendations.

Quality Assurance Committee:

During the previous Federal fiscal year, the Committee met with representatives from the Center for Research and Public Policy to review previous questions and to learn what kind of questions could be added or deleted to the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. The Committee also discussed the inclusion of active clients in the survey sample.

The recommendations were forwarded to ORS Administrators for review and then sent to the Center for Research and Public Policy for the survey to be conducted. The Committee then reviewed the questions adding, deleting, and re-arranging the order of the questions to reflect the inclusion of active clients.

As indicated previously, the Survey was conducted during the FFY 2004 with the recommendations of the Quality Assurance Committee.

Membership/Leadership Committee:

The committee met to interview prospective candidates for membership to the SRC. Recommendations were made to the full Council, passed, and forwarded to the ORS to request appointment by the Governor. The Committee has also made recommendations that the terms of membership be staggered to ensure that only one third of the Council would leave annually. ORS supports this recommended change, since a significant number of SRC members left the Council recently, resulting in a leadership void.

The Committee has also recommended that the terms of office be changed to two years for Chair and Vice-Chair, with the expectation that the Vice-Chair become Chair upon the completion of the current Chair's term of office. ORS believes that such a change will ensure continuity, and strengthen the leadership of the SRC.

The Membership/Leadership Committee has also suggested that the SRC meet in different venues to educate the public about the role of the SRC and to promote the mission of the Office of Rehabilitation Services. ORS and the SRC have begun meeting in different locations, including a netWORKri office as part of that process.

## **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)

*ISSUE:*

In last year's update, ORS reported that it was working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) regarding Supported Employment. We are not sure whether this MOU exists. If so, the SRC would be interested in obtaining a copy.

*RESPONSE:*

In order to ensure consistency among CRP's in terms of supported employment services, ORS has developed the *Matrix Of Approved Providers Of Vocational Rehabilitation Services* describing the services provided by each vendor. The matrix is

designed to be easily accessed and updated. By stating clearly what services are offered by each CRP vendor, expectations are better understood by ORS customers enhancing informed choice. The matrix was developed in consultation with the Sherlock Center at Rhode Island College. ORS determined that an easily updated tool such as this would be more useful than a formal MOU.

*ISSUE:*

The SRC is pleased to learn of the Sherlock Center's proposal for the creation of a Supported Employment Advisory Council focused on individuals with developmental disabilities, and believes ORS participation in the Council would be beneficial to consumers.

*RESPONSE:*

ORS is supporting this initiative by engaging in a cooperative agreement with the Sherlock Center which includes the development of the Supported Employment (SE) Advisory Councils. The Mental Health Advisory Council has been developed through this partnership. ORS is currently collaborating with the Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals and Community Service Providers in the creation of a Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council. The Developmental Disabilities (DD) Advisory Council mirrors the Mental Health Advisory Council in that it provides a forum for discussion regarding important issues that impact on service provision. The ORS Community Rehabilitation Specialist, Regional Supervisors, and VR Counselors participate in Council meetings along with D.D. service providers. ORS has conducted training for the D.D. service providers related to new ORS forms describing what is required for Individual Pre-Placement Assessments and On-Site Assessments during the Supported Employment process. The training will result in more consistent service provision for ORS customers and will be repeated on a periodic basis. In addition, ORS participates in training for Mental Health service providers through the Council of

Community Mental Health to provide information about Supported Employment services and the vocational rehabilitation process, in general.

*ISSUE:*

The SRC is also interested in learning more about ORS' collaboration with the Sherlock Center on the transition-focused one-year systems change project. We think that attention to the gaps in services for students with developmental disabilities is warranted, and look forward to learning about recommendations made by the project.

*RESPONSE:*

ORS has been an active member of the Steering Committee of the "Families Support 360" grant. The focus of the Grant has been to determine where gaps in services occur for students with developmental disabilities as they transition from the secondary education system to adult service providers. Approximately twenty families were targeted for the Grant. Students ranged in age from thirteen to twenty-one. Geographic and socio-economic factors were also considered as part of the selection process. The Sherlock Center is in the process of applying for a three-year systems change grant based on the results of this one-year planning grant. ORS will be sharing the findings from the grant activities with the SRC as they become available.

Attachment 4.11 (b)

*ISSUE:*

The SRC appreciates the specific information on numbers of counselors who meet the CSPD standard of having a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. We also are pleased to learn that ORS is anticipating potential workforce changes and is providing ongoing opportunities for leadership development for newer staff.

It appears as though ORS originally planned to hire the Bilingual Health Representative in 2002, and has been unable to fund the position. We are interested in learning whether existing staff training has lessened the need for this position.

*RESPONSE:*

Although ORS is providing training to staff related to cultural diversity, and we are working with Community Rehabilitation Programs to create more culturally responsive resources, we recognize the need for in-house capability to provide appropriate services to cultural minorities. ORS will make every effort to advocate for the hiring of bilingual staff whenever possible within the guidelines of State Personnel rules, budget constraints, and viable agreements with State bargaining units.

Attachment 4.12 (a)

*ISSUE:*

The electronic system put in place to organize vendors according to geographic location is helpful for counselors to assist individuals with local services. The "Vendor Report Card" being developed by the CRP specialist will be helpful for consumers in making informed decisions about their service providers. The Fee Schedule has been revised, and is accessible via the ORS website. The software program JAWS has been installed to aid those individuals with visual impairments. These are both positive steps forward.

*RESPONSE:*

The ORS remains committed to informed choice for all our customers throughout the vocational rehabilitation process. ORS has developed a number of fact sheets including "Career Planning for Students", "Assessment", "On-the-Job Training",

“Benefits Planning” and “RIPTA” to assist customers with information decision-making which are available on the ORS website. The ORS Policy Manual and Cooperative Agreements with other departments and agencies can also be accessed via the web site.

*ISSUE:*

Resource Expansion for Individuals who are Blind and Visually Impaired: The SRC is interested in learning more about the new program developed by SBVI in conjunction with INSIGHT. In particular we are interested in learning about the trainings offered for VR students. We would also be interested in learning more about the new equipment (computer programs) that is available to these students for the purpose of job search, job preparation and employment

*RESPONSE:*

SBVI has worked with Insight to develop a training program for keyboard skills development, since this is a basic requirement for computer use. In addition, training on basic skills for JAWS (screen-reading software) is included in the program. Adaptive software has been purchased to enable blind and visually impaired individuals to access career exploration programs such as Careerscope, and resume-writing software (Winway). Also, customers can access the internet using screen-reading software (JAWS), or "Magic, or ZoomTech" for those with low vision. A variety of other adaptive devices has been purchased to enable customers of SBVI to try out the equipment in the environment where it would be utilized. This will allow for informed decisions about equipment choice.

*ISSUE:*

The SRC is pleased to see that ORS has been working with the netWORKri Centers offering job-seeking skills workshops for individuals who are not fluent in English. We are interested in learning how many consumers are benefiting from these workshops.

*RESPONSE:*

To date, ORS bilingual counselor has conducted three job-seeking skills workshops in collaboration with Department of Labor and Training (DLT) bilingual staff in the Pawtucket netWORKri One Stop for approximately fifteen consumers. The workshops include valuable information about conducting an effective job search, as well as resume-writing techniques and practice job interviews.

*ISSUE:*

The SRC is also happy to see ORS working in conjunction with the RIDE in a variety of ways. We would be interested in information about the Transition Academy and its success for FFY 2004. We are also interested in learning about the second Transition Academy that will be opened for FFY 2005, and how the decision was made to select the areas of the State to initiate this new pattern of service.

*RESPONSE:*

There are five educational Collaboratives established by legislative action, which provide educational services in specific geographic areas of Rhode Island. ORS, through its cooperative agreement with the Rhode Island Department of Education has contracted with the regional Collaboratives to develop Regional Vocational Assessment Centers to provide vocational assessment services to ORS eligible students in the various geographical areas. Two of the Collaboratives have initiated the establishment of

Transition Academies. The first Transition Academy was established through the West Bay Educational Collaborative, housed at the Warwick campus of CCRI. The second Transition Academy is being housed at Salve Regina University, providing services to the East Bay. The relationship between ORS and these two programs is that of fee for services, based on the needs of individual students. The local education agencies also have financial responsibility towards the cost of the programs. The decision regarding which region of the State should be first, second, etc., was made independent of ORS. The start-up funding for these programs is being provided by RIDE.

Seven students completed the first year of ORS participation in the Transition Academy. Referrals for the next academic year have been reviewed and 14 students have been accepted for the program. The second Transition Academy expects to have at least eight students for its first year of operations.

*ISSUE:*

The SRC would like to see a copy of the new employment policy with regard to developing business plans for those individuals seeking self-employment.

*RESPONSE:*

The ORS has been working together with the SRC Policy Committee and the RI Disability Law Center on a new Employment Policy which includes a description of the necessary elements of a business plan for customers choosing self-employment. This policy is currently going through the Administrative Procedures Act process. The ORS will share the policy information with the SRC when it is finalized.

*ISSUE:*

The SRC is pleased to learn that ORS has developed training for DHS social caseworkers related to the employment needs of individuals with learning disabilities receiving TANF. However, the program should also include training on the employment needs of individuals on TANF who have other disabilities. We also hope that this training initiative will lead to increased employment outcomes in the current fiscal year and beyond.

*RESPONSE:*

Although the training provided to Department of Human Services (DHS) social caseworkers has a focus on individuals with learning disabilities, the issues of co-existing and concomitant conditions are part of the regular training process and are addressed as needed. ORS has initiated a pilot program for Family Independence Program participants at three local DHS offices which expedites the referral and eligibility process.

*ISSUE:*

The SRC is pleased that ORS has been working closely with RIPTA to improve transportation options for individuals seeking employment. We would be interested in learning more about the flex service and how it has benefited the consumer.

*RESPONSE:*

The flex program provides a transportation option that would not otherwise be available to ORS customers residing in areas of the state where there are no fixed bus routes. Therefore, employment options have increased as customers may travel to broader geographical areas to engage in suitable employment.

*ISSUE:*

The SRC is happy to see that ORS is now providing orientation programs to consumers in Spanish at the Providence and Pawtucket One-Stops. We would encourage ORS to target outreach to other minority populations as well.

*RESPONSE:*

Through ORS work with numerous community-based organizations, such as Genesis and Dorcas Place, we are providing services to other minority populations, including Portuguese-speaking individuals, Southeast Asians, and other members of the minority community. ORS seeks every opportunity to work in collaboration with community-based organizations whose mission is to provide services to culturally-diverse populations. ORS is currently working with the Director of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation providing information regarding new initiatives to provide vocational rehabilitation services to Native Americans, in particular the Narragansett Indian tribe in Rhode Island.

*ISSUE:*

ORS notes that since the start of FFY 2004 there are two pending Administrative Hearings and no pending Mediation dates. Since October 2003, ORS notes that two new requests for Mediation were made. The SRC would be interested in the outcomes.

*RESPONSE:*

One individual has withdrawn the request for Mediation, while the other ORS customer has agreed to recommended vocational rehabilitation services. No Mediations are scheduled at this time.

Attachment 4.12 (b)

*ISSUE:*

The total number of individuals who will apply for services in FFY 2005 is projected to be roughly the same as FFY 2003, however, the total number of applicants projected to be found eligible for services is higher than in FFY 2003. We are pleased that ORS will be providing services to additional consumers in FFY 2005.

*RESPONSE:*

ORS has significantly decreased the time necessary to determine eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services which results in increased numbers of individuals receiving vocational rehabilitation services. Clinical supervision and staff training are on-going activities to ensure timely provision of VR services. Improvements to the Management Information System (MIS) also aid in this process.

Attachment 4.12 (c) (1)

*ISSUE:*

ORS's goals and priorities do not contain any data about ORS's progress in achieving the goals and objectives described in its original 5-year plan. For example, in the updates to the 2002 plan, ORS acknowledged the need to reduce the number of unsuccessful closures and offered strategies to improve their competitive employment outcomes. We are interested in whether or not those strategies did improve the competitive employment outcomes. Further, we are interested in ORS's progress in achieving the goals and objectives described in the original 5-year plan. ORS has invited all SRC staff to participate in the two Consumer Satisfaction Survey Team Reviews to look at outcomes.

*RESPONSE:*

ORS recognizes the need to identify the goals and objectives described in the original 5-year plan and share results and outcomes with the SRC. In FFY 2002 1,004 Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) were developed with ORS consumers. In FFY 2003, 1,024 IPE's were developed. In FFY 2002, 571 individuals were successfully employed, and in FFY 2003, 606 individuals were successfully employed. The steady increase in the number of successful outcomes affirms that the strategies identified in the state plan are improving the competitive employment outcomes.

Attachment 4.12(c)(3)

*ISSUE:*

The SRC is pleased to see that new patterns of service have been initiated for FFY2004 and FFY2005. We are interested in seeing how the new patterns of service affect supported employment services.

*RESPONSE:*

The new patterns of services have had a positive impact on Supported Employment programs. ORS customers are being provided more diverse work opportunities leading to careers with potential for growth. Community Rehabilitation Programs are more aware of the importance of motivation and work potential as they refer individuals to ORS for vocational rehabilitation services. They have concentrated their job development efforts on more suitable employment outcomes for ORS customers.

Attachment 4.12 (d)

Please refer to response to Attachment 4.11(b).

Attachment 4.12 (d)(1)

Please refer to response to Attachment 4.12(a).

Attachment 4.12 (d)(2)

Please refer to response to Attachment 4.11(b).

Attachment 4.12 (d)(3)

*ISSUE:*

We concur that there is a lack of sign-language interpreters in Rhode Island, and we wonder what ORS might do to encourage persons with hearing impairments and ability to sign to become interpreters.

*RESPONSE:*

ORS is working closely with the Rhode Island Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing in their strategic planning to address the needs of the Deaf community including interpreter resources for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

Attachment 4.12 (e)

*ISSUE:*

While updated information regarding the use of Innovation and Expansion funds has been provided, the SRC is interested in learning about the progress and evaluation as well as the assessment of state performance on standards and indicators.

*RESPONSE:*

ORS has provided updated Standards & Indicators Reports at SRC meetings. ORS staff also regularly receives Quarterly Standards & Indicators Reports as recommended by the SRC. ORS will continue to provide productivity reports as requested by the SRC.

Attachment 7.3

*ISSUE:*

In FFY 2003, there were 878 individuals receiving supported employment services from ORS but only 275 (or just over 30%) were employed in integrated settings. In FFY 2004, to date, 665 individuals are being served, and only 97 (or about 14%) thus far are employed in integrated settings. The SRC would like more information about what ORS is doing to help the remaining individuals move into employment in integrated settings. We are interested in a breakdown of the data based on disability, i.e., developmental disability or mental impairment.

*RESPONSE:*

ORS new pattern of services is expected to increase successful outcomes for both customers with mental illness and those with developmental disabilities. The process is outcomes-based, therefore, sending a clear message that ORS expects that our customers will be provided quality and expeditious vocational rehabilitation services. The "Business to Business" initiative is also expected to provide more quality employment

outcomes, while leveraging the services of the business community. In addition, improved communication with M.I. and D.D. service providers through the Supported Employment Advisory Councils is expected to result in increased employment outcomes.

ORS will continue to provide the SRC with information relative to employment outcomes and caseload demographics.

ORS is also including the Annual Report of the SRC with this Attachment for further detailed description of their activities and recommendations.

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.9 (C) (4)**

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

Interagency collaboration continued in FFY 2004 related to supported employment. ORS Counselors work with “Disability Resource Specialists” and “Employment Specialists” employed by the One Stops to provide assistance to individuals with disabilities who utilize services at the centers. On-the-Job Training (OJT) options are considered when appropriate, expanding career choices for customers with disabilities. ORS collaborates with the Disability Resource Specialists and Employment Specialists to access OJT opportunities through WIA.

Collaboration with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP’s) related to implementation of the One-Stop Career Systems continues. Through the development of six (6) Employer Service Network committees that include CRP’s, ORS and the Department of Labor and Training work together to improve employment services and outcomes resulting from the One-Stop System. It is expected that through this collaboration, individuals with disabilities will have greater access to the One-Stop system to include benefits planning.

ORS participates in a “Supported Employment Advisory Council” convened by the Department of Mental Health Retardation and Hospitals (MHRH), Division of Integrated Mental Health Services that includes mental health providers, consumers, families, and staff from the Sherlock Center for Disabilities. The purpose of the Supported Employment Advisory Council is to provide the impetus for the community mental health system to move from center-based day programs to community-integrated employment.

The Sherlock Center for Disabilities is in the process of proposing to the Division of Developmental Disabilities a method to convene a Supported Employment Advisory Council that would focus on the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities.

The mission or purpose of this council would be to mirror the efforts of the existing Supported Employment Advisory Council, that is, facilitate as appropriate the transition from center-based day programs to community-integrated employment. The “council” also provides ORS with a forum to share information, outreach and technical assistance to ensure quality and consistency of services among all CRP providers.

In order to provide appropriate, responsive vocational rehabilitation services to customers with developmental disabilities, ORS has worked collaboratively with PAL, a consumer driven organization offering advocacy and employment-related mentoring.

ORS is also collaborating with the Sherlock Center on Disabilities, the Department of Education Office of Special Populations, the Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN), the Regional Educational Collaboratives, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities in a planning grant focusing on the gaps in services to students with developmental disabilities transitioning from secondary education to adult service providers. This is a one-year grant that may lead to 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 2004 continues to focus on the process of achieving CSPD standards for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Rhode Island (C) has a total FTE of ninety-two, which includes forty VR Counselor positions. For additional personnel information, see Addendum I, Organization Chart. Currently, the agency has a total caseload of 6,830, with an average counselor caseload of 140. Over the next three to five years, it is expected that the total agency caseload will increase by at least five percent annually, with concurrent individual counselor caseload increases. Since the start of FFY 2004, seven Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor vacancies occurred and five have been filled by individuals with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. We anticipate that this will be the case with the two vacancies for which recruitment is underway. Over the next three to five years, ORS anticipates that a number of personnel may be eligible for retirement. We estimate that approximately a total of twenty-two individuals will be eligible to retire. This figure could also be impacted by possible early retirement incentives offered by the State which we cannot predict. Individuals include senior management, management, and counselors. ORS is providing opportunities for leadership development whenever possible. Staff have the opportunity to participate in such activities as the State Plan development, 107 on-site monitoring reviews conducted annually by RSA, participation in RCEP advisory committees and participation in other agency work groups. 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 each have two courses to complete. Two Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf are actively participating in a Master's Degree program to complete their CSPD plans. One is in the program held at Assumption

College and one is enrolled in the local satellite program, developed collaboratively by ORS and Assumption College. An additional rehabilitation counselor needs to participate in a full Master's degree program. All other VR counselors meet the CSPD standard of a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, which is the entry-level requirement for VR counselors at ORS. This means that of the thirty-seven counselor positions that are presently filled, thirty-two meet the standard, or eighty-six percent (86%). In addition, all VR Field Supervisors meet the CSPD standard.

In addition to the satellite Masters degree program developed collaboratively with Assumption College, Salve Regina University has established a Masters degree program with a start up date of FFY 2005. Discussions are planned with the University to ensure that the present and projected personnel needs of ORS are considered as the program is implemented.

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 to 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.

The Bilingual Health Representative position remains unfilled, due to state hire restrictions resulting from budget constraints. Training in how to meet the needs of non-

English speaking individuals who seek services from ORS is in the planning stages. This training will include information on use of the AT&T language line, how to access and use an interpreter, and cultural issues that may impact on the rehabilitation process. Members of ORS's Cultural Diversity Cadre will have a role in this training program. The Department of Human Services, in conjunction with ORS, will hold presentations from the US Census Bureau regarding recent trends in the Latino community for Rhode Island.

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 the Benefits Planning and Outreach continue to be training focuses, and address ways to enhance the agency's response strategies to increased inquiries and referrals and planning for employment services. This training base enables counselors to support "informed" choice by the individuals with the most significant disabilities who receive SSI and SSDI benefits. In addition, the training coordinator is developing an assessment tool 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, RI Office of Training & Development, Brain Injury Foundation, M.S. Society, Disability Law Center) provide this training, which is mandatory for new staff and provides a refresher to more experienced staff. ORS will continue to build upon and improve this training program during the balance of FY 2004 and into FY 2005.

A focus on employment-related training is underway in 2004 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 2004, 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 2004, 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 are

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 best 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.

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12(a)**

**RESULTS OF STATE WIDE ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS**

ORS has made progress in FFY2004 related to addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities as articulated in the five-year plan. A customer satisfaction study was completed in March, 2004 in partnership with the SRC Quality Assurance Committee. The study indicated many areas of strength in the responsiveness and services by ORS staff and an overall satisfaction level of the customers surveyed. Needs were identified related to enhancing opportunities for choice and providing clearer explanation of services.

Informed Choice and Resource Development: ORS and the SRC have continued to focus on informed choice during 2004. 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 is also developing a “Vendor Report Card” to provide additional information necessary for ORS customers to make informed decisions about service providers. Implementation began in FFY 2004 and will be updated as necessary. 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 Expansion for Individuals who are Blind and Visually Impaired: The staff at SBVI continues to seek programs that will enable individuals who are blind or visually impaired to successfully compete in today's labor market. A new program in Rhode Island developed in conjunction with community rehabilitation program providers, INSIGHT, has begun training its first group of VR students. SBVI has purchased new computers, software and assistive technology for its Career Assessment Center. During FFY 2004, a computer keyboarding program highlighting JAWS, MAGIC and ZOOMTEXT was offered for VR students entering college. A wide variety of adaptive equipment will be available through the Career Assessment Center. Clients of the agency will be able to use the technology to access the Internet, develop resumes or improve skills. In addition, the equipment will be available to be loaned for the purpose of job search, job preparation and employment.

WIA and One-Stop System: The Disability Resource Specialists at the netWORKri Centers work closely with ORS customers and staff in Orientations and in job clubs. ORS staff actively participates in State and Local Workforce Investment Boards and Youth Councils. ORS is partnering with the One-Stop staff in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, offering job-seeking skills workshops for limited English speaking consumers.

Transition Planning: Transition is a high priority for the ORS and the SRC. The ORS Assistant Administrator/Transition Coordinator is involved in the statewide school improvement plan with the RIDE. ORS is represented and actively involved in both Youth Councils, and involved in the RFP and grant review process to ensure access opportunities for youth with disabilities.

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 2004, the Assistant Administrator/Transition Coordinator met with ORS Transition Counselors to disseminate information and focus on problem-resolution where necessary to improve service provision.

Through the Transition Coordinator and CRP Specialist, pilot programs have been developed in Regional Educational Collaboratives to provide seamless services to students who are exiting the schools systems but still need supports in order to successfully transition to employment.

Three regional educational collaboratives have opted to provide these additional vocational services to students who require help to achieve their employment goals.

Both third-party cooperative agreements with RI Department of Education (RIDE) and MHRH have been renewed for 5 years and are coordinated together with focus on services for transitioning students.

A Transition Academy was established in FFY 2004 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. The Transition Academy is housed at the Community College of RI. In FFY 2005, a second transition academy will open in another geographic area in the State. ORS will expand its fee for services relationship to this new program.

Employment Options: In order to enhance ORS skills in assisting customers who choose Self Employment as the career goal, specific training has taken place in developing business plans and in self-employment. A Self-Employment Fact Sheet and worldwide web links to resources through the ORS web site have been implemented. A new employment policy has been written with assistance from the State Rehabilitation

Council and the RI Disability Law Center addressing self-employment options for customers of the ORS.

Renewed emphasis has been given to OJT for potential job-ready individuals. On-the-job training monies have been accessed to enhance the opportunity to obtain employment of the individual's choice.

TANF: The Rhode Island Learning Disabilities Project continues to be a nationally recognized Promising Practices program, which assists individuals in the Rhode Island Family Independence Program (FIP), towards economic self-sufficiency and independence. This intradepartmental partnership remains a high priority.

Program Highlights Include: The Rhode Island Learning Disabilities Project staff have assisted the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) in the creation of an educational training video regarding educational and employment needs of individuals on TANF with learning disabilities.

Project staff have provided cross training to DHS social caseworkers and clerical staff of learning disabilities and training of ORS rehabilitation counselors on TANF/FIP work requirements.

Developed and implemented a streamlined referral process with DHS social caseworkers for customers to receive services in a more timely and coordinated manner.

Developed ORS in-house partner team of rehabilitation counselor liaisons with FIP offices for sharing and disseminating information.

Piloted a new service delivery system for FIP customers in Northern Rhode Island FIP office.

Expanded resources including adding more psychologists to ORS provider list for psycho-educational assessments and evaluations on learning disabilities.

FFY 03 Results: 201 individuals engaged in Learning Disability assessments, education programming and vocational training; 120 new referrals; 79 customers in skills training and education programs; and 21 individuals successfully obtained and maintained employment.

Transportation: The Office of Rehabilitation Services and the RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) are working closely with each other and other state and local agencies to improve transportation options to employment for those individuals with disabilities. In FFY 2002, a new transportation system (Flex Service) was implemented in the most rural areas of the state. Flex Zones are geographically limited area of service where fixed routes and paratransit are not available. Flex service provides curb-to-curb, reservation-based service mixed with scheduled bus stops. The Work Link Pilot Program provides priority trips to work in all flex service zones. Since its implementation, Flex Service has provided a total of 37,000 trips per year. An access to opportunity committee continues to work together to implement a coordinated approach to travel training. The committee has been established to ensure that the flex zones are periodically reviewed. Specifically, flex zones are monitored for any increase in ridership, and for the needed expansion of zones. RIPTA and ORS have created a partnership to improve travel for all individuals with disabilities. Additionally, RIPTA and ORS have collaborated on a transportation option fact sheet for customers and staff to assist in career planning.

Cultural Diversity Outreach: The Cultural Diversity Cadre continues to develop and implement action steps to provide services 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 diversity on the rehabilitation process. 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.

Mediation Update: Since the start of FFY 2004 to the present there are two pending Administrative Hearing and no pending Mediation dates. In both cases the customer waved their right to Mediation and proceeded directly to a hearing. Both of the cases are presently awaiting new hearing dates. There are also two new requests for Mediation since 10/03 with one of the customers also requesting an Administrative Hearing. The case that requested both Mediation and a Hearing has a date scheduled for 3/31/04 for Mediation and is awaiting a Hearing date. The other case that only rebutted Mediation originally was scheduled for 1/20/04 but the customer requested it be rescheduled. It was rescheduled for 2/2/04 but the Mediation Officer had to reschedule because he was called out of State on that date. It was then scheduled for 2/11/04 but the customer requested it be rescheduled because he was assigned a new attorney from CAP and had not been able to meet the attorney before the scheduled date. It was scheduled for 3/23/04, but was postponed again until April 19, 2004. A Mediation Agreement was reached on April 19, 2004.

Consumer Surveys: The ORS and SRC have completed a follow-up survey to the 2003 Consumer Satisfaction Survey in conjunction with the Center for Research and Public Policy. Additionally, the New England Consumer Satisfaction Survey will be completed by FFY2005.

**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 1,800 new applicants in FY2005. Projected total number of eligible applicants in 2005 is 1,600. In FFY 2003 there were 1,759 new applicants and 1,452 of these individuals were determined eligible. There were a total of 1,025 individuals who developed their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) in FFY 2003.

- (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 FFY2005, projected total number of clients to be served under an Individualized Plan for Employment is 2900, of which 2,890 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)	2140
Category 2 (Significant disabilities)	750
IPE prior to OOS criteria:	10

- (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 2005 is estimated to be	\$1,200
Cost of services for OOS category #1 are estimated at	\$2,568,000
Cost of services for OOS category #2 are estimated at	\$900,000
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:

- To deliver customer-responsive world-class service;
- To be an employer that values and invests in each employee;
- To provide the necessary tools, training and learning opportunities to maintain a highly-skilled and high-performing workforce;
- To strengthen the public understanding of vocational rehabilitation programs;
- To implement specific initiatives that will result in increased minority participation in the VR program;
- To promote improved and expanded employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities through focus on:
  - Ticket to Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWIIA);
  - Workforce Investment Act (WIA);
  - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
  - Assistive Technology Act
  - Welfare-to-Work Programs
  - School-to-Work Programs and Transition Services
  - Partnership with State Rehabilitation Council
- To develop and enhance communication techniques and tools in order to ensure consistent quality of services through:
  - Organizing problem-solving meeting approaches among interested staff and community partners
  - Utilizing information technology more effectively for meetings and information sharing
- 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
- To strengthen clinical supervision approaches to improve overall outcomes in all areas
- To work in partnership with SRC and other partners to identify areas of need

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c) (2) (A)**

**ORDER OF SELECTION**

Order of selection will continue throughout FFY 2004 and FFY 2005. Vacancies due to promotions and retirements are expected to continue and substantial training is required for new counselors. In addition, all clients with new Individualized Plans for Employment in FFY 2003 and FFY 2004 have been individuals with most significant or significant disabilities requiring multiple services over an extended period. Therefore, the order of selection continues.

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

The State Agency 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. 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” means 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, quadriplegia, 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, the Agency anticipates serving customers who meet the first two categories only of the Order of Selection. Category 3 is not expected to be served.

While the Agency seeks additional case service dollars 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 FFY 2005 are based on recent performance:

OOS Category 1:	2140
OOS Category 2:	750
I PE Prior to OOS criteria:	10

**ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c) (3)**

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

Title VI Part B funds continue to be distributed through the Fee-for-Service mechanism with the emphasis on individually-planned services and outcome based payments. The Community Rehabilitation Program Specialist continues technical assistance sessions with vendors related to providing person-centered services in community integrated employment. Service expectations and definitions have been clarified through the Fee Schedule and through individual meetings and correspondence with our Community Rehabilitation Program providers. New patterns of service have been initiated for FFY 2004, FFY 2005 (see Attachment 7.3 for detailed information).

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12 (d)**

**STATE STRATEGIES FOR TITLE 1 FUNDS FOR INNOVATION AND  
EXPANSION**

In FFY2004 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. Other activities of the SRC that utilize the I & E authority include designing and administering the second tier of the customer satisfaction survey, and the Annual Employer Honor Roll hosted by the SRC and ORS. These activities will be carried forth to FFY 2005 also with I & E funds.

I & E funds were earmarked for the “Partnership 2 Employment” conference to help individuals with disabilities learn about employment options for FFY 2005.

I & E funds were earmarked for the establishment of a new program at the RI School for the Deaf. FFY 2004 is the third year of the program, but it is expected that an additional year will be funded (FFY 2005).

The purpose of the initiative is to expand transition services and career options, including career exploration, career development and community-based work experiences, to transitioning students who are deaf. Many of these students are also from culturally diverse populations. This service option provides quality and timely services to better meet the employment preparation needs of students transitioning from high school, who are deaf.

In FFY 2004, a new program was initiated with a regional educational collaborative 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 2005, a second program will be established with another regional educational center.

I & E funds have been utilized for the ORS sponsored Youth Leadership Forum in Rhode Island to build leadership skills and potential in youth with disabilities who are transitioning to adult life. This project is being repeated in 2004, with the expectation that a Youth forum will take place in FFY 2005.

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12(d) (1)**

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

In order to remain responsive to the needs and concerns of the disability community, besides the Agency's consumer satisfaction survey, 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.

ORS and the SRC have been working to promote the introduction and passage of Medicaid reform legislation. It would 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 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. Information sessions are being planned for parents of ORS customers at the educational collaboratives about this topic.

Transition services for students with disabilities remain a high priority for the ORS. ORS counselors are assigned to all school districts throughout the state, having scheduled visits to all public high schools. Counselors meet regularly with Special Education personnel to provide technical assistance, as well as to discuss referrals to ORS. ORS eligible students may be referred for vocational assessment services through the Regional Vocational Assessment Centers funded under the cooperative agreement with RIDE.

ORS is committed to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to meet the changing needs of various disability communities. ORS will outreach to the veterans Administration to develop a collaborative program of service-delivery to RI citizens who are disabled resulting from recent combat related injuries.

ORS counselors have received specialized training on the psychological and physical impact of severe burns to provide vocational rehabilitation services to victims of the Station nightclub fire in 2003.

Stronger collaboration has been developed with the public transportation system related to providing a broader array of transportation options to individuals with disabilities throughout the state. A new Work Link program was initiated in 2002 to provide employment transportation through the public transportation system in an underserved area of the state. An access to opportunity committee continues to work together to implement a coordinated approach to travel training. The committee has been established to ensure that the flex zones are periodically reviewed. Specifically, flex zones are monitored for any increase in ridership, and for the needed expansion of zones. RIPTA and ORS have created a partnership to improve travel for all individuals with disabilities. Additionally, RIPTA and ORS have collaborated on a transportation option fact sheet for customers and staff to assist in career planning.

**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**

Expansion of Resources

ORS is 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. Orientations in Spanish continue in the two metropolitan areas with the largest minority populations.

A quarterly employment meeting with a panel of minority program and disability services representatives from area colleges was organized, with assistance from the Cultural Diversity Cadre. This provided a two-way dialogue regarding both resources and outreach of students with disabilities.

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

A plan to connect with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce will be implemented. An effort will be made to expand on the job training opportunities. Goodwill has expanded their bilingual job development staff. A job club in Spanish will be developed jointly between netWORKri and ORS.

The Cultural Diversity Cadre will outreach to the Rhode Island Indian Council and will outreach to key resources such as Progreso Latino. In addition, the Cadre will connect with the Department of Health Minority Health program.

Due to significant turnover in staff and an influx of new immigrants into Rhode Island, 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. Basic documents continue to be translated, as needed. ORS sponsored a bilingual psychologist to a national conference to create learning disabilities screening tools and assessments for Spanish speaking clients.

**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.

Qualified ASL interpreters available in state colleges remain a need. Late in FFY2003, ORS initiated the development of an MOU with the State colleges and university to ensure access to programs for students with disabilities, including interpreter services. The MOU will be finalized in FFY 2004. 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 2004, efforts to reduce the number of unsuccessful closures are moving forward. Supervisors are taking a more active role in reviewing all possible closures. Counselors are being held to the task of insuring that all avenues of contacting a customer have been attempted. Each region has regional “stay in the office” days. These are reserved for such activities as making the additional efforts to contact customers who have not had any ORS contact for an extended time. Last year, as well as this year, many contacts were finally made which resulted in successful closures. The effort has been paying dividends. In general, counselors are much more aware of the need for continued regular contact with their customers right from the beginning of the rehabilitation process. Results have reflected more successful closures this year as compared to last year.

ORS remains committed to the provision of informed choice for all customers. Fact sheets on consumer choice for transportation, training, and IPE development were implemented. Counselors are more aware of offering consumers choices. In FFY 2004, 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.

ORS has two benefits planning specialists. In FFY 2004, there was a significant increase in the use of benefits planning for ORS customers. This is reflected in increased employment plans. Regional liaisons have been appointed to help with intra-regional questions related to benefits issues.

In FFY 2004, ORS began a fee for services relationship with the “Transition Academy” established with a regional educational center and the Community College of Rhode Island. Currently, there are eight ORS eligible students attending the program, with referrals beginning for the FFY 2005 school year. In FFY 2005, a second “Transition Academy” will be commencing with ORS fee for services participation. 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.

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

Staff members 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 choices.

The fourth Bi-Annual Partnerships to Employment Conference will take place in FFY 2005. 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.

In FFY 2004, ORS hired a Workforce Development Supervisor to coordinate all agency efforts related to employment for ORS customers. A detailed Workforce

development plan with timelines has been created which includes the activities of administrative personnel that support the mission of ORS. Outreach to employers and new referral sources is underway in each region at the ORS. 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 will be 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.

I & E funds are being utilized for a new program at the RI School for the Deaf. The program is currently operating in its third year (FFY2004). ORS plans to fund a fourth year (FFY 2005) with I & E funds, as the students served by the RISD have an increased need for Transition services. The purpose of this program is to expand transition services and career options, including career exploration, career development and community-based work experiences, to transitioning students who are deaf. Many of these students are also from culturally diverse populations. This new service option provides 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 2004 for the ORS sponsored Youth Leadership Forum. The Forum's purpose is to build leadership skills and potential in youth with disabilities who are transitioning to adult life. We anticipate that up to fourteen youths will participate in the program this year. It is also expected that student participants from the two previous Forums will be serving as volunteers to help with this year's activities, affording them a vehicle for leadership development.

I & E funds were earmarked for the enhancement of the SRC partnership, specifically in engaging a 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. The Customer Satisfaction Study was funded through I & E, as well as SRC Leadership development activities.

**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 2003, eight hundred seventy-eight (878) individuals received Supported Employment services from the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) in partnership with Community Rehabilitation Program providers. Of that number, two hundred seventy-five (275) individuals achieved a successful employment outcome that is, competitively employed in an integrated setting.

FFY 2004, to date, six hundred sixty-five individuals (665) are being served, with ninety-seven (97) individuals achieving successful competitive employment.

The Community Rehabilitation Program Specialist continues to be an active partner in the Supported Employment Advisory Council. This forum focuses 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. A second advisory council is being developed for individuals with developmental disabilities. The council's focus will mirror strategies already in place in the existing council. The second council is projected to be in place before the end of FFY 2004. Both advisory councils emphasize facilitating quality employment opportunities.

The Supported Employment pilot project is almost at the one-year point. The pilot started in April of 2003. It is too soon to draw conclusions, however, the 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.

Three new Supported Employment agencies have applied to provide services for ORS customers and are in the approval process.

Another new initiative at ORS is the “Business to Business” venture, which 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”.

ORS continues to develop strategies for increased options for the provision of extended services for customers engaged in Supported Employment. Through the cooperative agreement between the Department of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals (MHRH) and DHS/ORS, peer supports are being introduced to help customers with developmental disabilities maintain positive work behaviors as they transition from ORS involvement to extended services. Natural supports are encouraged whenever possible. The MHRH/ORS Cooperative Agreement describes the commitment of the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Division of Integrated Mental Health to provide extended services to Supported Employment customers. 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.