

**State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and
State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2013 (submitted FY 2012)**

Section 1: State Certifications

1.1 The **Alabama Dept. of Rehabilitation Services** is authorized to submit this State Plan under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended [1] and its supplement under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act [2].

1.2 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, the **Alabama Dept. of Rehabilitation Services** [3] agrees to operate and administer the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program in accordance with the provisions of this State Plan [4], the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations [5], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and the administration of the State Plan for the vocational rehabilitation services program.

1.3 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated state agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the provisions of the supplement to this State Plan [6], the Rehabilitation Act and all applicable regulations [7], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the Title I State Plan.

Yes

1.4 The designated state agency and/or the designated state unit has the authority under state law to perform the functions of the state regarding this State Plan and its supplement.

Yes

1.5 The state legally may carry out each provision of the State Plan and its supplement.

Yes

1.6 All provisions of the State Plan and its supplement are consistent with state law.

Yes

1.7 The Commissioner has the authority under state law to receive, hold and disburse federal funds made available under this State Plan and its supplement.

Yes

1.8 The Commissioner ADRS has the authority to submit this State Plan for vocational rehabilitation services and the State Plan supplement for supported employment services.

Yes

1.9 The agency that submits this State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

Yes

State Plan Certified By

As the authorized signatory identified above, I hereby certify that I will sign, date and retain in the files of the designated state agency/designated state unit Section 1 of the Preprint, and separate Certification of Lobbying forms (Form ED-80-0013; available at <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/ed80-013.pdf>) for both the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

Signed? Yes

Name of Signatory: Dr. Cary Boswell, Commissioner

Date Signed: 06/28/

Assurances Certified By

At the request of RSA, the designated state agency and/or the designated state unit provide the following assurance(s), in addition to those contained within Section 2 through 8 below, in connection with the approval of the State Plan for FY 2013

Yes

Signed? Yes

Name of Signatory: Dr. Cary Boswell, Commissioner

Date Signed: 06/28/2012

* The signatory of the assurance with the authority to execute and submit the State Plan will maintain a signed copy of the assurance(s) with the signed State Plan.

Section 1 Footnotes

[1] Public Law 93 112, as amended by Public Laws 93 516, 95 602, 98 221, 99 506, 100-630, 102-569, 103-073, and 105-220.

[2] Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

[3] All references in this plan to "designated state agency" or to "the state agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[4] No funds under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved State Plan in accordance with Section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR part 361.

[5] Applicable regulations include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85 and 86 and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program regulations in 34 CFR Part 361.

[6] No funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the Title I State Plan in accordance with Section 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[7] Applicable regulations include the EDGAR citations in footnote 5, 34 CFR Part 361, and 34 CFR Part 363.

Preprint - Section 2: Public Comment on State Plan Policies and Procedures

2.1 Public participation requirements. (Section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.10(d), .20(a), (b), (d); and 363.11(g)(9))

(a) Conduct of public meetings.

The designated state agency, prior to the adoption of any substantive policies or procedures governing the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the State Plan and supported employment services under the supplement to the State Plan, including making any substantive amendments to the policies and procedures, conducts public meetings throughout the state to provide the public, including individuals with disabilities, an opportunity to comment on the policies or procedures.

(b) Notice requirements.

The designated state agency, prior to conducting the public meetings, provides appropriate and sufficient notice throughout the state of the meetings in accordance with state law governing public meetings or, in the absence of state law governing public meetings, procedures developed by the state agency in consultation with the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council.

(c) Special consultation requirements.

The state agency actively consults with the director of the Client Assistance Program, the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council and, as appropriate, Indian tribes, tribal organizations and native Hawaiian organizations on its policies and procedures governing the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the State Plan and supported employment services under the supplement to the State Plan.

Preprint - Section 3: Submission of the State Plan and its Supplement

3.1 Submission and revisions of the State Plan and its supplement. (Sections 101(a)(1), (23) and 625(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act; Section 501 of the Workforce Investment Act; 34 CFR 76.140; 361.10(e), (f), and (g); and 363.10)

(a) The state submits to the commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration the State Plan and its supplement on the same date that the state submits either a State Plan under Section 112 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 or a state unified plan under Section 501 of that Rehabilitation Act.

(b) The state submits only those policies, procedures or descriptions required under this State Plan and its supplement that have not been previously submitted to and approved by the commissioner.

(c) The state submits to the commissioner, at such time and in such manner as the commissioner determines to be appropriate, reports containing annual updates of the information relating to the:

1. comprehensive system of personnel development;
2. assessments, estimates, goals and priorities, and reports of progress;
3. innovation and expansion activities; and
4. other updates of information required under Title I, Part B, or Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act that are requested by the commissioner.

(d) The State Plan and its supplement are in effect subject to the submission of modifications the state determines to be necessary or the commissioner requires based on a change in state policy, a change in federal law, including regulations, an interpretation of the Rehabilitation Act by a federal court or the highest court of the state, or a finding by the commissioner of state noncompliance with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361 or 34 CFR 363.

3.2 Supported Employment State Plan supplement. (Sections 101(a)(22) and 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.34 and 363.10)

(a) The state has an acceptable plan for carrying out Part B, of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act that provides for the use of funds under that part to supplement funds made available under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the cost of services leading to supported employment.

(b) The Supported Employment State Plan, including any needed annual revisions, is submitted as a supplement to the State Plan.

Preprint - Section 4: Administration of the State Plan

4.1 Designated state agency and designated state unit. (Section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.13(a) and (b))

(a) Designated state agency.

1. There is a state agency designated as the sole state agency to administer the State Plan or to supervise its administration in a political subdivision of the state by a sole local agency.
2. The designated state agency is a state agency that is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities. (Option B was not selected/Option A was selected)

3. In American Samoa, the designated state agency is the governor.

(b) Designated state unit.

1. If the designated state agency is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(B) of this section, the state agency includes a vocational rehabilitation bureau, division or unit that:
 - A. is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and is responsible for the administration of the designated state agency's vocational rehabilitation program under the State Plan;
 - B. has a full-time director;
 - C. has a staff, at least 90 percent of whom are employed full-time on the rehabilitation work of the organizational unit; and
 - D. is located at an organizational level and has an organizational status within the designated state agency comparable to that of other major organizational units of the designated state agency.
2. The name of the designated state vocational rehabilitation unit is Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services

4.2 State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council. (Sections 101(a)(21) and 105 of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.16 and .17)

The State Plan must contain one of the following assurances.

(a) The designated state agency is an independent state commission. (Option A was not selected/Option B was selected)

(b) The state has established a State Rehabilitation Council that meets the criteria set forth in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.17 and the designated state unit.

1. jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council develops, agrees to and reviews annually state goals and priorities and jointly submits to the commissioner annual reports of progress in accordance with the provisions of Section 101(a)(15) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.29 and subsection 4.11 of this State Plan;
2. regularly consults with the State Rehabilitation Council regarding the development, implementation and revision of state policies and procedures of general applicability pertaining to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services;
3. includes in the State Plan and in any revision to the State Plan a summary of input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including recommendations from the annual report of the council described in Section 105(c)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(5), the

review and analysis of consumer satisfaction described in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4), and other reports prepared by the council and the response of the designated state unit to the input and recommendations, including explanations for rejecting any input or recommendation; and

4. transmits to the council:
 - A. all plans, reports and other information required under 34 CFR 361 to be submitted to the commissioner;
 - B. all policies and information on all practices and procedures of general applicability provided to or used by rehabilitation personnel in carrying out this State Plan and its supplement; and
 - C. copies of due process hearing decisions issued under 34 CFR 361.57, which are transmitted in such a manner as to ensure that the identity of the participants in the hearings is kept confidential.

(c) If the designated state unit has a State Rehabilitation Council, Attachment 4.2(c) provides a summary of the input provided by the council consistent with the provisions identified in subparagraph (b)(3) of this section; the response of the designated state unit to the input and recommendations; and, explanations for the rejection of any input or any recommendation.

4.3 Consultations regarding the administration of the State Plan. (Section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.21)

The designated state agency takes into account, in connection with matters of general policy arising in the administration of the plan and its supplement, the views of:

- (a) individuals and groups of individuals who are recipients of vocational rehabilitation services or, as appropriate, the individuals' representatives;
- (b) personnel working in programs that provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;
- (c) providers of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;
- (d) the director of the Client Assistance Program; and
- (e) the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.

4.4 Nonfederal share. (Sections 7(14) and 101(a)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 80.24 and 361.60)

The nonfederal share of the cost of carrying out this State Plan is 21.3 percent and is provided through the financial participation by the state or, if the state elects, by the state and local agencies.

4.5 Local administration. (Sections 7(24) and 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.5(b)(47) and .15)

The State Plan provides for the administration of the plan by a local agency. No

If "Yes", the designated state agency:

(a) ensures that each local agency is under the supervision of the designated state unit with the sole local agency, as that term is defined in Section 7(24) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.5(b)(47), responsible for the administration of the vocational rehabilitation program within the political subdivision that it serves; and

(b) develops methods that each local agency will use to administer the vocational rehabilitation program in accordance with the State Plan.

4.6 Shared funding and administration of joint programs. (Section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.27)

The State Plan provides for the state agency to share funding and administrative responsibility with another state agency or local public agency to carry out a joint program to provide services to individuals with disabilities. No

If "Yes", the designated state agency submits to the commissioner for approval a plan that describes its shared funding and administrative arrangement. The plan must include:

(a) a description of the nature and scope of the joint program;

(b) the services to be provided under the joint program;

(c) the respective roles of each participating agency in the administration and provision of services; and

(d) the share of the costs to be assumed by each agency.

4.7 Statewideness and waivers of statewideness. (Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.25, .26, and .60(b)(3)(i) and (ii))

This agency is not requesting a waiver of statewideness.

(a) Services provided under the State Plan are available in all political subdivisions of the state.

(b) The state unit may provide services in one or more political subdivisions of the state that increase services or expand the scope of services that are available statewide under this State Plan if the:

1. nonfederal share of the cost of these services is met from funds provided by a local public agency, including funds contributed to a local public agency by a private agency, organization or individual;
2. services are likely to promote the vocational rehabilitation of substantially larger numbers of individuals with disabilities or of individuals with disabilities with particular types of impairments; and
3. state, for purposes other than the establishment of a community rehabilitation program or the construction of a particular facility for community rehabilitation program purposes, requests in

Attachment 4.7(b)(3) a waiver of the statewideness requirement in accordance with the following requirements:

- A. identification of the types of services to be provided;
- B. written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the state unit the nonfederal share of funds;
- C. written assurance that state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect; and
- D. written assurance that all other State Plan requirements, including a state's order of selection, will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

(c) Contributions, consistent with the requirements of 34 CFR 361.60(b)(3)(ii), by private entities of earmarked funds for particular geographic areas within the state may be used as part of the nonfederal share without the state requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement provided that the state notifies the commissioner that it cannot provide the full nonfederal share without using the earmarked funds.

4.8 Cooperation, collaboration and coordination. (Sections 101(a)(11), (24)(B), and 625(b)(4) and (5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.22, .23, .24, and .31, and 363.11(e))

(a) Cooperative agreements with other components of statewide work force investment system.

The designated state agency or the designated state unit has cooperative agreements with other entities that are components of the statewide work force investment system and replicates those agreements at the local level between individual offices of the designated state unit and local entities carrying out the One-Stop service delivery system or other activities through the statewide work force investment system.

(b) Cooperation and coordination with other agencies and entities.

Attachment 4.8(b) (1)-(4) describes the designated state agency's:

1. cooperation with and use of the services and facilities of the federal, state, and local agencies and programs, including programs carried out by the undersecretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture and state use contracting programs, to the extent that those agencies and programs are not carrying out activities through the statewide work force investment system;
2. coordination, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 4.8(c) of this section, with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services;
3. establishment of cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.10(b) of the State Plan; and,

4. efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and entities with respect to the provision of supported employment and extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with the requirements of subsection 6.5 of the supplement to this State Plan.

(c) Coordination with education officials.

1. Attachment 4.8(b)(2) describes the plans, policies and procedures for coordination between the designated state agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students who are individuals with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under the responsibility of the designated state agency.
2. The State Plan description must:
 - A. provide for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with 34 CFR 361.45 as early as possible during the transition planning process but, at the latest, before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting; and
 - B. include information on a formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency that, at a minimum, provides for:
 - i. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to postschool activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;
 - ii. transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and the educational agency for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
 - iii. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and
 - iv. procedures for outreach to students with disabilities as early as possible during the transition planning process and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

(d) Coordination with statewide independent living council and independent living centers.

The designated state unit, the Statewide Independent Living Council established under Section 705 of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364, and the independent living centers described in Part C of Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 366 have developed working relationships and coordinate their activities.

(e) Cooperative agreement with recipients of grants for services to American Indians.

1. There is in the state a recipient(s) of a grant under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing on or near federal and state reservations. **No**
2. If "Yes", the designated state agency has entered into a formal cooperative agreement that meets the following requirements with each grant recipient in the state that receives funds under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act:
 - A. strategies for interagency referral and information sharing that will assist in eligibility determinations and the development of individualized plans for employment;
 - B. procedures for ensuring that American Indians who are individuals with disabilities and are living near a reservation or tribal service area are provided vocational rehabilitation services; and
 - C. provisions for sharing resources in cooperative studies and assessments, joint training activities, and other collaborative activities designed to improve the provision of services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities.

4.9 Methods of administration. (Section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.12, .19 and .51(a) and (b))

(a) In general.

The state agency employs methods of administration, including procedures to ensure accurate data collection and financial accountability, found by the commissioner to be necessary for the proper and efficient administration of the plan and for carrying out all the functions for which the state is responsible under the plan and 34 CFR 361.

(b) Employment of individuals with disabilities.

The designated state agency and entities carrying out community rehabilitation programs in the state, who are in receipt of assistance under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and this State Plan, take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities covered under and on the same terms and conditions as set forth in Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act.

(c) Facilities.

Any facility used in connection with the delivery of services assisted under this State Plan meets program accessibility requirements consistent with the provisions, as applicable, of the Architectural Barriers Rehabilitation Act of 1968, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the regulations implementing these laws.

4.10 Comprehensive system of personnel development. (Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.18)

Attachment 4.10 describes the designated state agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of

qualified state rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated state unit. The description includes the following:

(a) Data system on personnel and personnel development.

Development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs and personnel development with respect to:

1. Qualified personnel needs.
 - A. The number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
 - B. The number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
 - C. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in five years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.
2. Personnel development.
 - A. A list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;
 - B. The number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
 - C. The number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

(b) Plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel.

Development, updating on an annual basis, and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel based on the data collection and analysis system described in paragraph (a) of this subsection and that provides for the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare and retain personnel who are qualified in accordance with paragraph (c) of this subsection, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

(c) Personnel standards.

Policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained, including:

1. standards that are consistent with any national- or state-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services.
2. To the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the state plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, the institutions of higher education identified in subparagraph (a)(2), and other public agencies of these steps and the time lines for taking each step.
3. The written plan required by subparagraph (c)(2) describes the following:
 - A. specific strategies for retraining, recruiting and hiring personnel;
 - B. the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards required by subparagraph (c)(1);
 - C. procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period; and
 - D. the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards and the identification of a plan for training such individuals to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

(d) Staff development.

Policies, procedures and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated state unit receive appropriate and adequate training. The narrative describes the following:

1. A system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement and rehabilitation technology.
2. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

(e) Personnel to address individual communication needs.

Availability of personnel within the designated state unit or obtaining the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.

(f) Coordination of personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Procedures and activities to coordinate the designated state unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

4.11. Statewide assessment; annual estimates; annual state goals and priorities; strategies; and progress reports.

(Sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2) and 625(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.17(h)(2), .29, and 363.11(b))

(a) Comprehensive statewide assessment.

1. Attachment 4.11(a) documents the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, jointly conducted every three years by the designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council (if the state has such a council). The assessment describes:
 - A. the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:
 - i. individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
 - ii. individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under this State Plan; and
 - iii. individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide work force investment system.
 - B. The need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.
2. For any year in which the state updates the assessments, the designated state unit submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding updates to the assessments.

(b) Annual estimates.

Attachment 4.11(b) identifies on an annual basis state estimates of the:

1. number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services under the plan;
2. number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds provided under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and under Part B of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection in accordance with

subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of this State Plan, estimates of the number of individuals to be served under each priority category within the order; and

3. costs of the services described in subparagraph (b)(1), including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection, the service costs for each priority category within the order.

(c) Goals and priorities.

1. Attachment 4.11(c)(1) identifies the goals and priorities of the state that are jointly developed or revised, as applicable, with and agreed to by the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council, in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.
2. The designated state agency submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding any revisions in the goals and priorities for any year the state revises the goals and priorities.
3. Order of selection.
If the state agency implements an order of selection, consistent with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of the State Plan, Attachment 4.11(c)(3):
 - A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
 - B. provides a justification for the order; and
 - C. identifies the service and outcome goals, and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
4. Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds.
Attachment 4.11(c)(4) specifies, consistent with subsection 6.4 of the State Plan supplement, the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

(d) Strategies.

1. Attachment 4.11(d) describes the strategies, including:
 - A. the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities, including how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to those individuals at each stage of the rehabilitation process and how those services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis;
 - B. outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities in accordance with subsection 6.6 of the State Plan supplement, and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
 - C. as applicable, the plan of the state for establishing, developing or improving community rehabilitation programs;

- D. strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
 - E. strategies for assisting other components of the statewide work force investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.
2. Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the designated state agency uses these strategies to:
 - A. address the needs identified in the assessment conducted under paragraph 4.11(a) and achieve the goals and priorities identified in the State Plan attachments under paragraph 4.11(c);
 - B. support the innovation and expansion activities identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) of the plan; and
 - C. overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Supported Employment Services Program.

(e) Evaluation and reports of progress.

1. The designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state unit has a council, jointly submits to the commissioner an annual report on the results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and the progress made in improving the effectiveness of the program from the previous year.
2. Attachment 4.11(e)(2):
 - A. provides an evaluation of the extent to which the goals identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3) were achieved;
 - B. identifies the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals and priorities;
 - C. describes the factors that impeded their achievement, to the extent they were not achieved;
 - D. assesses the performance of the state on the standards and indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
 - E. provides a report consistent with paragraph 4.12(c) of the plan on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were utilized in the preceding year.

4.12 Innovation and expansion. (Section 101(a)(18) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.35)

(a) The designated state agency reserves and uses a portion of the funds allotted to the state under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the:

1. development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this State Plan, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of

the statewide assessment identified in Attachment 4.11(a) and goals and priorities of the state identified in Attachments 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3); and

2. support of the funding for the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 105(d)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(i), and the funding of the Statewide Independent Living Council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 705(e)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364.21(i).

(b) Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the reserved funds identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) will be utilized.

(c) Attachment 4.11(e)(2) describes how the reserved funds were utilized in the preceding year.

4.13 Reports. (Section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.40)

(a) The designated state unit submits reports in the form and level of detail and at the time required by the commissioner regarding applicants for and eligible individuals receiving services under the State Plan.

(b) Information submitted in the reports provides a complete count, unless sampling techniques are used, of the applicants and eligible individuals in a manner that permits the greatest possible cross-classification of data and protects the confidentiality of the identity of each individual.

Preprint - Section 5: Administration of the Provision of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

5.1 Information and referral services. (Sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.37)

The designated state agency has implemented an information and referral system that is adequate to ensure that individuals with disabilities, including individuals who do not meet the agency's order of selection criteria for receiving vocational rehabilitation services if the agency is operating on an order of selection, are provided accurate vocational rehabilitation information and guidance, including counseling and referral for job placement, using appropriate modes of communication, to assist such individuals in preparing for, securing, retaining or regaining employment, and are referred to other appropriate federal and state programs, including other components of the statewide work force investment system in the state.

5.2 Residency. (Section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.42(c)(1))

The designated state unit imposes no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the state.

5.3 Ability to serve all eligible individuals; order of selection for services. (Sections 12(d) and 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.36)

(a) The designated state unit is able to provide the full range of services listed in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the state who apply for services. Yes

(b) If No:

1. Individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with criteria established by the state, are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services before other individuals with disabilities.
2. Attachment 4.11(c)(3):
 - A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
 - B. provides a justification for the order of selection; and
 - C. identifies the state's service and outcome goals and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
3. Eligible individuals who do not meet the order of selection criteria have access to the services provided through the designated state unit's information and referral system established under Section 101(a)(20) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.37, and subsection 5.1 of this State Plan.

5.4 Availability of comparable services and benefits. (Sections 101(a)(8) and 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.53)

(a) Prior to providing any vocational rehabilitation services, except those services identified in paragraph (b), to an eligible individual or to members of the individual's family, the state unit determines whether comparable services and benefits exist under any other program and whether those services and benefits are available to the individual.

(b) The following services are exempt from a determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits:

1. assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;
2. counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act;
3. referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide work force investment system, through agreements developed under Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act, if such services are not available under this State Plan;

4. job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;
5. rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids and devices; and
6. post-employment services consisting of the services listed under subparagraphs (1) through (5) of this paragraph.

(c) The requirements of paragraph (a) of this section do not apply if the determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits under any other program would interrupt or delay:

1. progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment;
2. an immediate job placement; or
3. provision of vocational rehabilitation services to any individual who is determined to be at extreme medical risk, based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate qualified medical professional.

(d) The governor in consultation with the designated state vocational rehabilitation agency and other appropriate agencies ensures that an interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination that meets the requirements of Section 101(a)(8)(B)(i)-(iv) of the Rehabilitation Act takes effect between the designated state unit and any appropriate public entity, including the state Medicaid program, a public institution of higher education, and a component of the statewide work force investment system to ensure the provision of the vocational rehabilitation services identified in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, other than the services identified in paragraph (b) of this section, that are included in the individualized plan for employment of an eligible individual, including the provision of those vocational rehabilitation services during the pendency of any dispute that may arise in the implementation of the interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination.

5.5 Individualized plan for employment. (Section 101(a)(9) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.45 and .46)

(a) An individualized plan for employment meeting the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.45 and .46 is developed and implemented in a timely manner for each individual determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, except if the state has implemented an order of selection, and is developed and implemented for each individual to whom the designated state unit is able to provide vocational rehabilitation services.

(b) Services to an eligible individual are provided in accordance with the provisions of the individualized plan for employment.

5.6 Opportunity to make informed choices regarding the selection of services and providers. (Sections 101(a)(19) and 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.52)

Applicants and eligible individuals or, as appropriate, their representatives are provided information and support services to assist in exercising informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process, consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.52.

5.7 Services to American Indians. (Section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.30)

The designated state unit provides vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the state to the same extent as the designated state agency provides such services to other significant populations of individuals with disabilities residing in the state.

5.8 Annual review of individuals in extended employment or other employment under special certificate provisions of the fair labor standards act of 1938. (Section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.55)

(a) The designated state unit conducts an annual review and reevaluation of the status of each individual with a disability served under this State Plan:

1. who has achieved an employment outcome in which the individual is compensated in accordance with Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (29 U.S.C. 214(c)); or
2. whose record of services is closed while the individual is in extended employment on the basis that the individual is unable to achieve an employment outcome in an integrated setting or that the individual made an informed choice to remain in extended employment.

(b) The designated state unit carries out the annual review and reevaluation for two years after the individual's record of services is closed (and thereafter if requested by the individual or, if appropriate, the individual's representative) to determine the interests, priorities and needs of the individual with respect to competitive employment or training for competitive employment.

(c) The designated state unit makes maximum efforts, including the identification and provision of vocational rehabilitation services, reasonable accommodations and other necessary support services, to assist the individuals described in paragraph (a) in engaging in competitive employment.

(d) The individual with a disability or, if appropriate, the individual's representative has input into the review and reevaluation and, through signed acknowledgement, attests that the review and reevaluation have been conducted.

5.9 Use of Title I funds for construction of facilities. (Sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.49(a)(1), .61 and .62(b))

If the state elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs, the following requirements are met:

(a) The federal share of the cost of construction for facilities for a fiscal year does not exceed an amount equal to 10 percent of the state's allotment under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for that fiscal year.

(b) The provisions of Section 306 of the Rehabilitation Act that were in effect prior to the enactment of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 apply to such construction.

(c) There is compliance with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.62(b) that ensure the use of the construction authority will not reduce the efforts of the designated state agency in providing other vocational rehabilitation services other than the establishment of facilities for community rehabilitation programs.

5.10 Contracts and cooperative agreements. (Section 101(a)(24) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.31 and .32)

(a) Contracts with for-profit organizations.

The designated state agency has the authority to enter into contracts with for-profit organizations for the purpose of providing, as vocational rehabilitation services, on-the-job training and related programs for individuals with disabilities under Part A of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, upon the determination by the designated state agency that for-profit organizations are better qualified to provide vocational rehabilitation services than nonprofit agencies and organizations.

(b) Cooperative agreements with private nonprofit organizations.

Attachment 4.8(b)(3) describes the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

Preprint - Section 6: Program Administration

Section 6: Program Administration

6.1 Designated state agency. (Section 625(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(a))

The designated state agency for vocational rehabilitation services identified in paragraph 1.2 of the Title I State Plan is the state agency designated to administer the State Supported Employment Services Program authorized under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act.

6.2 Statewide assessment of supported employment services needs. (Section 625(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(b))

Attachment 4.11(a) describes the results of the comprehensive, statewide needs assessment conducted under Section 101(a)(15)(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and subparagraph 4.11(a)(1) of the Title I State Plan with respect to the rehabilitation needs of individuals with most significant disabilities and their need for supported employment services, including needs related to coordination.

6.3 Quality, scope and extent of supported employment services. (Section 625(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(c) and .50(b)(2))

Attachment 6.3 describes the quality, scope and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive supported employment services. The description also addresses the timing of the transition to extended services to

be provided by relevant state agencies, private nonprofit organizations or other sources following the cessation of supported employment service provided by the designated state agency.

6.4 Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds. (Section 625(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(d) and .20)

Attachment 4.11(c)(4) identifies the state's goals and plans with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act.

6.5 Evidence of collaboration with respect to supported employment services and extended services. (Sections 625(b)(4) and (5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(e))

Attachment 4.8(b)(4) describes the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities to assist in the provision of supported employment services and other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations within the state, employers, natural supports, and other entities with respect to the provision of extended services.

6.6 Minority outreach. (34 CFR 363.11(f))

Attachment 4.11(d) includes a description of the designated state agency's outreach procedures for identifying and serving individuals with the most significant disabilities who are minorities.

6.7 Reports. (Sections 625(b)(8) and 626 of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(h) and .52)

The designated state agency submits reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the commissioner may require and collects the information required by Section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under Part B, of Title VI and individuals receiving supported employment services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

Preprint - Section 7: Financial Administration

7.1 Five percent limitation on administrative costs. (Section 625(b)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(g)(8))

The designated state agency expends no more than five percent of the state's allotment under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for administrative costs in carrying out the State Supported Employment Services Program.

7.2 Use of funds in providing services. (Sections 623 and 625(b)(6)(A) and (D) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.6(c)(2)(iv), .11(g)(1) and (4))

(a) Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act are used by the designated state agency only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive such services.

(b) Funds provided under Title VI, Part B, are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act, in providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment.

(c) Funds provided under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act are not used to provide extended services to individuals who are eligible under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

Preprint - Section 8: Provision of Supported Employment Services

8.1 Scope of supported employment services. (Sections 7(36) and 625(b)(6)(F) and (G) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54), 363.11(g)(6) and (7))

(a) Supported employment services are those services as defined in Section 7(36) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54).

(b) To the extent job skills training is provided, the training is provided on-site.

(c) Supported employment services include placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

8.2 Comprehensive assessments of individuals with significant disabilities. (Sections 7(2)(B) and 625(b)(6)(B); 34 CFR 361.5(b)(6)(ii) and 363.11(g)(2))

The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under Section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome.

8.3 Individualized plan for employment. (Sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 625(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.46(b) and 363.11(g)(3) and (5))

(a) An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.45 and .46 is developed and updated using funds under Title I.

(b) The individualized plan for employment:

1. specifies the supported employment services to be provided;
2. describes the expected extended services needed; and
3. identifies the source of extended services, including natural supports, or, to the extent that it is not possible to identify the source of extended services at the time the individualized plan for employment plan is developed, a statement describing the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that sources will become available.

(c) Services provided under an individualized plan for employment are coordinated with services provided under other individualized plans established under other federal or state programs.

Attachment 4.2(c) Input of State Rehabilitation Council

Required annually by all agencies except those agencies that are independent consumer-controlled commissions.

Identify the Input provided by the state rehabilitation council, including recommendations from the council's annual report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other council reports. Be sure to also include:

- the Designated state unit's response to the input and recommendations; and
- explanations for the designated state unit's rejection of any input or recommendation of the council.

Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the DSU, and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services continues to have a State Rehabilitation Council which meets on a quarterly basis. Council membership is representative of the state and includes a cross section of disabilities and minorities. Local vocational rehabilitation advisory councils, created by the SRC to obtain direct consumer input at the local level and to provide easier access, continue to meet across the state, and there continues to be a report on information or advice from these councils at some quarterly SRC meetings. The councils also continue to serve as recruitment grounds for future SRC members due to member training provided during meetings.

The SRC continues to advise the Designated State Unit or DSU on a variety of issues. Specific activities and advice of the SRC for FY 2012 include the following:

(1) Review and comment on the State Plan. As in prior years, the SRC reviewed the state plan and attachments, and the DSU asked for comments. The SRC Chair again appointed a subcommittee to assist in setting goals for the State Plan and in writing it. This subcommittee ratified the goals and priorities proposed by the agency, and the SRC approved adoption of the State Plan as written. No other comments were obtained on the State Plan or attachments, nor were there any additional recommendations for changes or revisions.

(2) Review and comment on the Agency's CSPD. The SRC received information on the CSPD and recommended no significant changes to the recruitment or retention plan. The SRC also received information on current training programs for VRS staff and consumers and recommended no significant changes.

(3) Employment Subcommittee. The Employment Subcommittee updated its priorities and made the following recommendations:

Recommendation: VR should continue to maintain its role in hiring for federal contractors.

Agency response: The Agency accepts this recommendation and will implement it as soon as possible.

Recommendation: VR should support the online applicant pool on the ABLE Network web site by use of a VR intern to act as a “mystery shopper” on web site job postings to test their effectiveness.

Agency response: The Agency will take this recommendation under advisement.

Recommendation: The Agency should change the employer web page so that it has a button for job postings and resource links for staff training.

Agency response: The Agency will take this recommendation under advisement.

Recommendation: The Agency should re-label a button on the employer web page to read “accommodation reviews and assistance.”

Agency response: The Agency will take this recommendation under advisement.

Recommendation: The Agency should add materials to its employer web page that include emergency preparedness for employees with disabilities, VR client success stories, and a question and answer section.

Agency response: The Agency will take this recommendation under advisement.

(4) Review and comment on Impartial Hearing Officer List: The SRC continued to monitor the list for vacancies and recommend replacements where appropriate. No revisions to the list were recommended for FY 2012.

(5) SRC Training. Council members received training and/or informational materials on the following areas:

- a. SRC Purpose and Mission
- b. State of Alabama Independent Living Program
- c. State Plan
- d. Revised VR Counselors Roles and Responsibilities

(6) Revision of SRC bylaws. Since there were no changes to the Rehabilitation Act during FY 2012, the SRC did not amend its bylaws.

(7) Development of a resource plan and budget. The SRC Executive Subcommittee updated a resource plan listing all resources the Agency provides for operation of the SRC and amended it to include the most recent reimbursement rate for SRC travel. The subcommittee will continue to update this plan as needed. The SRC Executive Committee approved an SRC budget for operation of the SRC which was adopted by the DSU.

(8) SRC Deaf Advisory Subcommittee. This Subcommittee made the following recommendations:

Recommendation: The Agency should conduct the Deaf Satisfaction Survey every 2 years.

Agency response: The Agency will take this recommendation under advisement.

(9) Review and comment on VRS Consumer Satisfaction Survey

The SRC Consumer Services/Program Evaluation Subcommittee met to review a proposed consumer satisfaction survey and process recommended by Auburn University, which has a contract to conduct the VR satisfaction survey and statewide needs assessment for the general VR program. The SRC received information on the results of the FY 2010 survey, preliminary results for the FY 2011 survey and 3 year trends for FY 2009, 2010, and 2011. The SRC adopted the Subcommittee's recommendations as outlined below.

Recommendation: The Agency should continue using the current survey instrument for the General VR Program jointly developed by the SRC and Auburn University.

Agency response: The Agency accepts this recommendation and will implement it.

This screen was last updated on Jun 28 2012 5:16PM by Jim Harris lli

Attachment 4.7(b)(3) Request for Waiver of Statewideness

Identify the types of services to be provided by the program for which the waiver of statewideness is requested.

The waiver request should also include:

- a written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the designated state unit the non-federal share of funds;
- a written assurance that designated state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect;
- a written assurance that all state plan requirements will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

This agency has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

Attachment 4.8(b)(1) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment System

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce investment system with respect to

- Federal, state, and local agencies and programs;
- if applicable, Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture; and
- if applicable, state use contracting programs.

COOPERATION AND COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND ENTITIES

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services has cooperative agreements and working relationships with entities outside of the state Workforce Investment System. These agreements provide the agency with the opportunity to extend services to people with disabilities referred by other agencies, as well as the chance to utilize the services of other agencies for its consumers.

Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind (AIDB) ADRS enjoys an excellent working relationship with AIDB. AIDB is charged with the responsibility of providing elementary and high school residential education for blind and deaf students in Alabama. Also, through its E. H. Gentry Technical Facility, it provides vocational assessment and training for adults with visual, hearing, and other disabilities. ADRS refers consumers to E. H. Gentry for vocational services. Also, the agency works very cooperatively with AIDB in providing appropriate services to students in the AIDB high schools for the blind and deaf. ADRS works collaboratively with the School for the Deaf and School for the Blind to provide deaf and blind students with summer employment opportunities. ADRS also works actively with the Helen Keller School for Deaf and Blind which is also a part of the AIDB system. ADRS assists AIDB in transitioning these students into employment when they have completed school or, when appropriate, assists the students with further education.

ADRS has a collaborative agreement with AIDB to jointly fund Rehabilitation Teachers who provide special teaching services to people with visual disabilities. Also, the agency jointly funds Interpreters, Randolph-Sheppard Specialists, and Orientation and Mobility Instructors.

Department of Corrections ADRS is cooperating with the Alabama Department of Corrections. ADRS receives referrals on inmates who are in the prison system who will be transitioning back into their home areas. ADRS has established a system to handle these referrals and provide services to eligible individuals when they return home. An ADRS staff specialist in the State Office is overseeing this initiative.

Department of Risk Management ADRS works cooperatively with Alabama's Risk Management program. We receive referrals of individuals injured on the job to assist Risk Management in helping various state agencies retain individuals in employment who may have been injured.

Governor's Office ADRS receives, on a regular basis, referrals from the Governor's office. The Governor's office contacts ADRS to make referrals of individuals who have contacted the Governor's office regarding various problems. These referrals are received by an Assistant Commissioner of ADRS, and forwarded to the appropriate local supervisor for follow-up and assessment. Understandably, many of these referrals are for services beyond the scope of ADRS; however, efforts are made to provide the Governor's staff with an appropriate service outlet to address the needs of the consumer.

Bureau of Indian Affairs ADRS recognizes the need for services to Native Americans. The agency has liaison counselors assigned to various tribes throughout the state to receive referrals and to extend our services to Native Americans within Alabama.

Department of Youth Services (DYS) Alabama has a Department of Youth Services. This Department is established to work with delinquent youth. It is hoped that the services of DYS will prevent delinquent

youth from eventually advancing to the adult correctional system. ADRS has a specialist who is very actively involved with DYS. This individual receives referrals on a regular basis from DYS and forwards those referrals to the appropriate field staff.

Department of Mental Health (DMH) The Agency maintains an ongoing relationship with DMH. ADRS serves numerous consumers with mental illness. ADRS works on cooperative initiatives to ensure services are provided to eligible consumers. ADRS maintains a relationship with the DMH Division of Substance Abuse and a network of residential aftercare service providers.

Alabama Head Injury Foundation (AHIF) ADRS continues its relationship with the Alabama Head Injury Foundation. This relationship is directed towards maintaining a service delivery system to address the needs of consumers affected by traumatic brain injury.

Community Rehabilitation Programs ADRS continues an excellent working relationship with a wide network of community rehabilitation programs throughout the state. These CRPs are a critical link in our service delivery effort.

Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) ADRS has an ongoing partnership with the ADECA. The agency has worked cooperatively to pursue grants to serve people with disabilities.

Alabama's Special Camp for Children and Adults with disabilities (CAMP ASSCA) Camp ASSCA is a totally accessible outdoor camp designed to address the special needs of people with disabilities.

The Alabama Disability Advocacy Program (ADAP) ADAP is the Alabama arm of the Protection and Advocacy program for people with disabilities. ADAP makes referrals to Alabama's toll free number for information on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Disability Rights and Resource (Birmingham) Montgomery Independent Living Center (BILC) and the Mobile Independent Living Center (MILC) DRR and the MILC provide independent living services. The three centers assisted ADRS with the distribution of the Statewide Needs Assessment survey in 2008. The agency also receives referrals from the Independent Living Centers.

Governor's Office on Disability (GOOD) GOOD serves as a clearinghouse for resources related to people with disabilities. ADRS maintains an ongoing relationship with the Office and its director, Graham Sisson.

Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) ADRS partners with OFCCP to provide affirmative action training to employers on issues related to hiring and retaining workers with disabilities.

Federal Office of Personnel Management (OPM) The OPM state director is actively involved in ADRS consumer employment activities including new services to employers and implementation of federal mandates to hire people with disabilities into federal jobs.

Social Security Administration (SSA) The Agency maintains an excellent working relationship with the SSA. An agency state office specialist in Social Security, Donna Bowden, is very knowledgeable regarding Social Security issues. She has given numerous presentations on the Ticket to Work, Work Incentives Improvement Act, not only to ADRS staff, but other agencies staff.

Veterans Administration (VA) The agency is collaborating with the VA to serve and place into employment veterans completing the VA vocational rehabilitation program. The VA is able to provide many rehabilitation services, but needs assistance with job placement. A cooperative agreement was completed in 2006. The agreement defines the role of the agency and the VA in the referral process. The agency has a group of liaison counselors who will receive referrals and disburse them to local counselors throughout the state.

Rural Development Office of Alabama The agency established contact with the Rural Development Office of Alabama. The invitation was made to provide referrals to the agency of people with disabilities in rural areas who may need agency services.

Attachment 4.8(b)(2) Coordination with Education Officials

- Describe the designated state unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including provisions for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or, if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection, before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting.
- Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency with respect to
 - consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;
 - transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs;
 - roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
 - procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) has a history of placing special emphasis on coordination of school-to-work activities. ADRS is committed to assisting students with disabilities in making a smooth transition to the world of work. ADRS Transition programs are coordinated with state and local education officials.

At the state level, ADRS participates as an equal partner in the State of Alabama Interagency Transition Team (SITT). The SITT is an interagency work group led by the State Department of Education, Special

Education Services Division. The purpose of this group is to identify any existing barriers to effective transition services, develop state and local policies/procedures that eliminate or reduce those barriers and promote a comprehensive, coordinated transition service system. The SITT collaborates to host an annual Transition Conference. The lead agency for this effort is Auburn University.

Another initiative at the state level is the collaboration of ADRS and the State Department of Education in the development of a formal interagency agreement which specifies how VR staff and local education agency personnel will cooperate. The agreement describes scope of services to be provided by the State Department of Education (SDE) and ADRS; the financial responsibilities of each party; the methods of consultation and technical services needed to formulate IEPs; the role of each agency in transition planning; and methods and strategies for identification of students needing transition services. Transition planning, sharing of student information, and consultation activities are stated in the agreement. All activities described in this attachment, regarding working with educational institutions are formalized in the interagency agreement.

ADRS sponsored many members' attendance at the annual Transition Conference. This conference provides an opportunity for counselors and transition staff to be updated on the latest successful trends and practices related to transition. It is well attended by education officials. This allows ADRS staff excellent interaction opportunities with education staff and teachers. Dates have been set for the Transition Conference in the upcoming fiscal year. ADRS will utilize this conference as a training opportunity for staff serving transition students.

At the local level, the ADRS has procedures in place to ensure the agency is actively involved in the transition of students with disabilities from school to work. The agency has a counselor assigned to each high school to act as transition counselor. The counselor visits the school on a regularly scheduled basis to meet with teachers and guidance counselors in order to receive referrals of students with disabilities in need of rehabilitation services. The VR counselor meets with the student and parents in order to explain rehabilitation services to enable a student's informed choice regarding these services. School records and other information needed for eligibility determination is obtained. Once eligibility is determined, efforts are made to begin identifying rehabilitation needs and a vocational goal. Counselors make every effort to participate in IEP meetings. This provides the counselor the opportunity to have issues addressed in the IEP related to disability. The counselor also provides some level of expertise regarding accommodations the student may need related to disability. Counselors develop the IPE prior to a student's exit from school and coordinates the IPE with the IEP. Transition students represent 33% of all people placed into successful employment.

The VR Transition counselor may utilize a vocational evaluation provided by a community rehabilitation program to obtain specific information regarding the student's vocational potential and possibilities. If needed, this is usually completed after the junior year, but may occur earlier. Results of such an evaluation are shared with the school for use in formulating subsequent IEPs. The counselor follows the student through to graduation. When the student has completed high school the next phase of the rehabilitation process is implemented. This may include college, vocational training, community rehabilitation services, or employment, depending on the needs of the individual student.

ADRS recognizes the roles and responsibilities of each agency. Educational responsibilities rest with educational agencies which includes the cost of accommodations for students with disabilities. Transition counselors are trained to be sure responsibilities of the education agency are not transferred to ADRS while the student is in school. The educational agency is responsible for ensuring students with disabilities are provided equal access to education. The school is responsible for providing school records to be used in determining eligibility and planning a rehabilitation program. ADRS utilizes school records, other available information, and vocational evaluations in order to develop a rehabilitation program.

Outreach efforts by the agency are very strong in the area of transition. As noted above, a counselor is assigned to each school. Most often, working with transition cases will be the exclusive work assignment of a counselor that the agency refers to as a 'transition counselor'. In the more rural areas, a counselor may work with other cases in addition to transition cases. The performance evaluation of a transition counselor is based on their success in working with transition consumers.

The Transition Program will continue the College Prep and Career Prep Programs for students with disabilities. These programs are offered by ADRS through collaboration with the Alabama Department of Post-Secondary Education and Higher Education. ADRS continues efforts in the following transition initiatives:

- Continuation of the Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum in collaboration with the Troy University Institute for Leadership Development, the Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, the Alabama State Department of Education and the Alabama Department of Mental Health.
- Continuation of a Prison Transition Program (PTI) for young transition-aged (16 - 21) prison inmates with disabilities who are eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. The program, developed in cooperation with the Department of Education and the Alabama Department of Corrections, will link these young people to transition and employment services available through Vocational Rehabilitation Service. Through this program, inmates will receive information about ADRS services, be connected with an ADRS office in their home communities and have an appointment scheduled with a VR counselor prior to release from incarceration.
- Continuation and expansion of specialty Teen Transition Clinics for students with special health care needs. These clinics bring together staff with various skills and from diverse disciplines to address the special needs of these youth.

Attachment 4.8(b)(3) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

Describe the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE, NONPROFIT VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE PROVIDERS

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) maintains a viable working partnership with 26 Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) statewide. The CRPs play a vital role in assisting the

department to meet its mission of providing quality employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Currently, the Accreditation Commission (CARF) accredits 20 of the CRPs in Alabama. As the nature of services provided by CRPs continues to change, the options regarding standards and accreditation requirements will change.

The CRP division of ADRS currently has four staff members. This includes an Assistant Commissioner and two Rehabilitation Specialists and a clerical support person. One of the Rehabilitation Specialists is assigned to specifically enhance the agency's supported employment program. The specialists are responsible for initiating agreements with non-profits and for profits from which ADRS consumers receive services. CRP division staff review the qualifications of both nonprofits and for profits, meet to discuss fees and payment rates, and monitor service delivery through management/data reports and field visits. In 2005 the agency instituted a system to ensure that all community based service providers who desire to provide services meet CARF standards and maintain their accreditation. This requirement provides some assurance that CRP's address issues like ADA accessibility, accountability, safety, staff qualifications, accommodations, and affirmative action in hiring persons with disabilities and address any special communication needs of consumers.

Currently, agency staff meets with CRP staff to discuss services and formulate an agreement that establishes agreed upon fees for each CRP. This information is shared with local counselors so that appropriate service authorizations can be made to the CRPs.

The department has formally developed and implemented the "Stages to Employment Payment System" (STEPS), which is a three-step outcome based payment schedule that is efficient, requires minimal paperwork, and focuses on the individual needs of the consumer served. To date this effort has met with positive feedback and all CRPs are utilizing this service/payment system.

The department continues to work cooperatively with CRPs statewide to improve services at the local level. There is a continuous need for services. The development and establishment of new programs will change with the assessment of consumer needs.

Based on an assessment of the capacity and effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services currently provided by CRPs statewide, a number of trends appear to be taking place:

- Increased emphasis on serving individuals that are considered underserved, individuals with the most significant disabilities, and individuals residing in rural areas of the state
- Increased emphasis on consumer choice
- Increased emphasis on serving AVRS consumers in their home communities
- Increased emphasis on integrated employment
- Increased incentives based on performance
- Increased emphasis on community based services

- CRPs are becoming more diversified regarding services provided and funding streams
- More options regarding accreditation requirements as providers and the nature of service provision changes
- Increase of supported employment long term supports

The department's commissioner, the assistant commissioner for community rehabilitation programs, the assistant commissioners for general field services and blind/deaf services, and the CRP specialists meet regularly with all community rehabilitation program directors. These meetings provide the opportunity to discuss issues of mutual concern, improve communication, and focus on the continuous improvement of the partnership.

Supported employment is available in Alabama to individuals who require intensive and extended support services for an appropriate and successful employment outcome. Supported employment services are available through some 34 community based providers in the state. These services are currently provided in all regions of the state through cooperative agreements with community-based organizations and agencies. The availability of job coach services is provided in most of the state's network of 26 community rehabilitation programs. Additionally, specialized center based services for blind and deaf consumers are being expanded and developed in local communities throughout the state.

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services continues to stay abreast of national issues regarding community rehabilitation facilities through its attendance and participation in conferences of state and national significance including the International Conference on Employment and Community Services sponsored by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

Collaborative efforts between ADRS Computer Services and the CRP section have recently developed computer generated reports that assist the CRP section in tracking targeted CRP goals and outcomes such as numbers of individuals successfully employed, cost per successful closure, and average wage.

Attachment 4.8(b)(4) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

Describe the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide the following services to individuals with the most significant disabilities:

- supported employment services; and
- extended services.

EVIDENCE OF COLLABORATION REGARDING SUPPORTED

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND EXTENDED SERVICES

Supported Employment (SE) is available in Alabama for individuals with the most significant disabilities who require intensive support services, and extended support services for an appropriate and successful

employment outcome. These services are provided in all regions of the state by 34 approved community-based organizations.

Supported Employment services are available to individuals regardless of their disability. Currently, the primary disabilities served include significant intellectual disabilities, severe mental illness, cerebral palsy, and autism spectrum disorders, visual and hearing impairments, severe orthopedic impairments, traumatic brain injury, and other severe disabilities.

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services currently utilizes a Milestones service and payment process. Milestones, a service and outcome based payment system, has significantly improved the quality of supported employment throughout the state, while proving to be more cost effective for the Agency. Providers of supported employment are paid for successful outcomes achieved by individuals participating in supported employment. The Milestones program segments the rehabilitation process into four distinct areas: (1) Determination of Needs and the Discovery Process, (2) Hire, (3) Job Retention/Coaching and (4) Closure.

Extended supports, which may include natural supports available at the job site, are provided for the duration of the employment. Providers of long term supports are required to document twice monthly contact with each consumer successfully working in the community, and to maintain this documentation in case files for the duration of that consumer's job. This information is reported monthly to the ADRS Supported Employment Coordinator for tracking purposes.

To ensure the highest quality of services, training is provided throughout the year to address issues related to supported employment, including the provision of extended services. This training is available to all SE providers as well as other agencies that may collaborate to provide supports to an individual working in the community. These agencies include the Alabama Department of Mental Health, The Alabama Department of Education, the Social Security Administration, and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Efforts are currently underway with the Department of Education, Department of Mental Health, the Developmental Disabilities Council and SE providers to conduct two pilot Project Search Programs for students who are exiting from high school. Additionally, a statewide initiative is being planned to improve transition services for students who need SE. The 34 SE provider agencies will be involved in this training for school staff, parents, students and other community partners.

An effort to collaborate with the Department of Mental Health regarding Alabama's Employment First initiative is underway. Interagency regional meetings on application and eligibility to improve services and awareness between the two agencies were recently completed. Waiver services were also discussed as well as Social Security work incentives.

Training and educational activities continue with the Alabama Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE), the Department of Mental Health, and the Department of Education to offer training activities that improves the consistency of service delivery by job coaches and supported employment providers. This training is coordinated by ADRS and offered by Virginia Commonwealth University's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports.

Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

1. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

- the number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
- the number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
- projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

1.) Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development: ADRS maintains a comprehensive system of data on personnel needs. This is maintained within the agency's human resource division. This data system allows for the input of personal information about each staff member and includes all possible training opportunities for staff to attend. It can also record historical information about each training, maintain participant lists, and track continuing education credit hours as needed.

As reported in the latest RSA-2 information (December 2011), ADRS has 533 individuals providing vocational rehabilitation services throughout the four personnel reporting categories. The total number of consumers served by the staff was 31,710. The majority (76%) of individuals served were coded in case files as having significant disabilities.

RSA-2 Personnel Reporting Categories:

Administrative Staff 19

Counselor Staff 184

Staff Supporting Counselor Activities 293

Other Staff 37

Total 533

The 184, classified as "counselor staff," can be somewhat deceiving because it takes into account specialty staff that may not be considered actual vocational rehabilitation counselors. This number is currently closer to 155 rehabilitation counselors who provide services through our field offices and One-Stop Career Center sites. Each of these counselors currently averages a caseload of approximately 130 consumers. New vocational rehabilitation counselor positions (FTEs) are not being requested in next year's budget because all of the current vacancies cannot be filled due to the mandated statewide hiring

freeze and budgetary constraints. The department continues to fill some vacancies by requesting hiring freeze exceptions. These exceptions are granted/approved only when a “critical” need can be established and funding for the position(s) is justified.

A database is used to track the educational backgrounds and experience of the 172 active counselors and field supervisors within the department for the express purpose of encouraging and enabling all staff to reach the state’s highest definition of ‘qualified rehabilitation professionals.’ This database supports already existing systems and contains information gathered from educational transcripts required upon application to this job classification.

The agency also employs orientation and mobility instructors, interpreters, rehabilitation teachers and rehabilitation employment specialists. A qualification for orientation mobility instructor is an ACVREP or NOMC certification. Interpreters must be licensed by the Alabama Licensure Board for Interpreters and Transliterators. A rehabilitation teacher must have at least a bachelor’s degree and one year experience; however, many of the rehabilitation teachers have a master’s degree. The rehabilitation employment specialists may come from a business background or a vocational rehabilitation service background with appropriate degrees.

Ninety (90) “counselor staff” and thirteen (13) “administrative staff” will be eligible to retire within the next five years. These numbers represent actual positions currently filled and do not include those budgeted positions presently not filled. There are many unfilled positions due to the hiring freeze. This number also does not represent the average turnover rate among these personnel categories. In addition, supervisor and state office positions are included in this number (90) because counselors are often promoted into these supervisory roles, leaving counselor vacancies. Therefore, based on the rehabilitation counselor turnover rate, we can project the need for approximately sixty-one (61) counselors over the next five years to remain staffed at the current budgeted level. The average turnover rate for rehabilitation counselor in the last year was .53%, and for senior rehabilitation counselor, .27%. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the turnover was related to retirements, the other seventy-five (75%), due to resignations and dismissals.

It is difficult to project the number of ‘Staff Supporting Counselor Activities’ and ‘Other’ staff. An estimate would be ninety-two (92) supporting staff and twelve (12) other staff over the next five years. This is based on the approximate departmental turnover rate of .63%, projected retirements, and unfilled positions.

The Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) bill passed by the Alabama legislature in 2002 allowed an employee to technically retire, but remain on the job at their regular salary. The opportunity to maintain experienced employees for a period of up to five additional years was an advantage for the department. The Alabama Legislature passed a bill ending enrollment in the DROP program beginning May 2011. Though some staff remain in the DROP, it is no longer an option for others. Consequently, the department continues to be involved in succession planning, despite the current statewide hiring and merit raise freeze.

The department’s Leadership Training Institute (LTI) has 81 graduates still working for the department. This training works to prepare existing staff to assume leadership roles. These graduates actively compete for leadership roles when vacancies occur. Another method of preparing LTI graduates for

leadership roles is involving them in departmental task forces and special assignments. It gives current leadership the chance to see how well LTI graduates perform and the strengths they possess.

All rehabilitation counselors hired to work with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services must possess master’s degrees from an accredited university in specific fields of study and become “eligible to sit” for the CRC exam. Only one counselor, hired years ago, still works for the department and does not possess a master’s degree. One other counselor, hired before this standard, has a master’s degree but in a non-related field of study. Six counselors have master’s degrees in counseling, but lack coursework to be eligible to sit for the CRC. All have been offered educational opportunities in cooperation with one of the state’s accredited Master’s in Rehabilitation Counseling Programs.

Currently, Alabama has five universities to offer the Master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling. The universities, recent enrollment figures, and last year’s graduation numbers are listed below. (As reported by the universities)

University	Students Enrolled	Graduated
Auburn University (distance ed. & campus)	68	27
University of Alabama	27	12
Alabama A&M	22	4
Troy University (combined campuses)	120	11
*Alabama State University	19	9

*This program became CORE accredited in 2011.

The above institutions provide excellent candidates for available counseling positions. This often translates into increased candidates for the department to recruit into employment. All graduates obtain the necessary credentials to apply for and/or test for certification and licensure.

Three of the universities also offer an undergraduate program in rehabilitation. These programs produce graduates who can fill employment development coordinator vacancies and jointly funded job coach positions between ADRS and the local school systems. The universities, recent enrollment figures, and last year’s graduation numbers are listed below. (As reported by the universities)

University	Students Enrolled	Graduated
Auburn University	50	8
Troy University	120	11
Alabama State University	120	18

Alabama is fortunate to have a large number of universities providing rehabilitation education. Although there is a statewide hiring freeze mandated for all state agencies, it is anticipated there will be an

adequate pool of applicants available for hire when this freeze is lifted or when the hiring exceptions are approved.

The state personnel department’s qualifications for rehabilitation counselor currently require specific master’s degrees; therefore, ADRS will not be presented with candidates without appropriate degrees. In addition, ADRS and state personnel have worked to strengthen the application process by setting a time limit to be “eligible to sit” for the CRCC (the end of their probationary period which is up to one year).

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Unit Supervisors	20	0	4
2	Rehabilitation Counselors	155	8	20
3	Rehabilitation Teachers	17	1	5
4	Orientation and Mobility Instructors	5	3	0
5	Interpreters	9	0	2
6	Rehabilitation Specialists	13	1	3
7	State Office Administrators	2	0	1
8	Rehabilitation Technologists	5	1	3
9		0	0	0
10		0	0	0

2. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

- a list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;

- the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Row	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
1	Auburn University	68	1	22	27
2	Alabama State University	19	0	5	9
3	Alabama A&M University	22	0	3	4
4	Troy University	120	0	18	11
5	University of Alabama	27	2	0	12

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Describe the development (updated on an annual basis) and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the Coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

Recruitment and Retention Issues: ADRS works diligently to implement strategies necessary to address personnel issues. Since 2002, the department has a dedicated staff specialist devoted to the issues of recruitment and retention. This individual works with the executive leadership team and task forces to create and implement strategic plans in both areas. However, ultimately the State Department of Personnel is the entity that provides and oversees hiring practices, salary schedules, and staff vacancies among other personnel issues. Within the strategic planning and implementation process, the following issues are addressed:

1.) Maintaining a strong relationship with key personnel at the State Department of Personnel and universities offering educational opportunities for potential ADRS employees. Unpaid internships will continue to be offered as a recruiting tool for students in the field of rehabilitation. Paid internships will be re-instated once the hiring freeze is lifted. The professional trainee job class will be used to attract individuals to pursue professions in rehabilitation requiring experience such as rehabilitation teacher and rehabilitation employment specialist. This will allow dedicated individuals to train while gaining the experience needed to be eligible for hire. A hiring procedure known as 'disability preference' continues to enable ADRS to recruit qualified individuals with disabilities. Other avenues to recruit individuals with disabilities are made possible through specialty areas such as rehabilitation teaching and orientation and mobility.

2.) Continuation of promotions of deserving rehabilitation counselors to the senior rehabilitation counselor level. Promotions are based on exemplary performance of job duties and the ability to take on additional duties within the unit. This provides incentive for younger counselors to remain with the department and helps address the issue of supervisory succession planning. The counselors who are promoted and retained are then in line to fill supervisory vacancies, with proper training.

3.) Regularly scheduled exhibits at various professional and disability organization meetings to share employment opportunities with potential candidates. Exhibits are used for recruiting students into the field of rehabilitation and for recruiting professionals into positions within the department. Several ADRS administrators serve on advisory boards for rehabilitation counseling programs and also sit on interviewing panels for RSA scholarship recipients.

4.) Maintaining an active role on the advisory committees of Alabama A&M University and Alabama State University. Both universities are known as historically black colleges/universities and provide an opportunity to recruit students from more diverse backgrounds to positions within the department. The ADRS mentoring program places rehabilitation counselors with students from diverse backgrounds as a tool to educate and recruit them into the field of rehabilitation.

Seasoned and retired staff are encouraged to work as adjunct professors within the graduate rehabilitation counseling programs which affords a practical application of information to the students.

5.) Develop more marketing tools, created through annual meetings with educators, to increase interest in the field of rehabilitation from high school students and encourage undergraduate students to pursue Master's level work in one of the rehabilitation programs. There is a new initiative to use the contacts of departmental transition counselors to recruit high school students across the state. This year staff participated in high school career fairs to educate students about the field of rehabilitation.

The ADRS public website has been updated to include an expanded career opportunities section that can be accessed by college career services, advocacy groups, and students. This section provides information on career opportunities and employee benefits available within the department.

Personnel Standards

Describe the state agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

1. standards that are consistent with any national or state-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services; and
2. to the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the State Plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, institutions of higher education, and other public agencies of these steps and the timelines for taking each step.

Be sure to include the following:

- specific strategies for retraining, recruiting, and hiring personnel;
- the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards;
- procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period;
- the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards;
- the identification of a plan for training newly hired personnel who do not meet the established standards to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

Personnel Standards: The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services adopted a standard which states rehabilitation counselors would be “eligible to sit” for the CRC exam by October 2009. This standard is easily obtainable by a majority of new staff, because they are graduating from rehabilitation specific programs. Almost all other staff hold related degrees, which fortunately contain coursework in the theories and techniques of counseling, a critical component in an individual’s ability to be “eligible to sit” under current CRCC reviewing practices. Transcripts are required as part of the state personnel application process allowing coursework to be reviewed by the hiring supervisor and the human resource division of the department.

71 possess a master’s degree and CRC certification (41%)

Additionally, 96 possess a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling (CORE program) or required coursework and experience and are eligible to sit for the CRC exam (96%)

5 require additional coursework to meet the CSPD standard:

3 require a community resources course (which they will take in the fall)

1 requires a medical aspects course

1 requires all four courses- community resources, medical aspects, assessment, and occupational information

1 possesses non-related master's degrees

1 does not possess a master's degree

The seven employees who either do not possess a master's degree, possess a master's degree in a non-related field, or possess a related degree but without the necessary coursework have been presented with opportunities to acquire a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling through RSA long term training grant programs or obtain the necessary coursework through the RSA in-service training grant. One of the seven is eligible to retire. All have been made aware of the requirement to meet the state standard. Those who chose to remain or were hired by the department beyond the required timeframe have had their signature authority removed for determinations of eligibility and rehabilitation plans. These rehabilitation counselor specific duties must be reviewed, approved, and signed by a senior counselor or supervisor meeting the CSPD standard. Current and closed consumer files are reviewed by the department's Quality Assurance section to assure compliance with this policy until the staff meets the CSPD requirement.

While the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services has adopted a standard which states rehabilitation counselors will be "eligible to sit" for the CRC exam, the minimum qualifications adopted by the State Personnel Department of Alabama, until the 2012 changes, required a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, rehabilitation services, rehabilitation administration, vocational evaluation, or counseling to be placed on the counselor register of candidates. Rehabilitation counselors wishing to work with the deaf must score intermediate or higher on the Sign Language Proficiency Interview. These minimum qualifications from the State Personnel Department created numerous training issues with staff already in place with related degrees or staff placed in the more rural counties where rehabilitation specific candidates have historically been more difficult to recruit. Fortunately, individuals with master's degrees in rehabilitation counseling are more abundant due to the large number of educational programs within the state. It has also been the preference of the department to hire these individuals before others who do not meet the state's CSPD standard.

ADRS and state personnel worked this year to strengthen the application process by requiring that qualified candidates must be eligible to sit for the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) by the end of their probationary period (up to one year). This change, implemented in 2012, gives ADRS the ability to terminate employees who do not complete the necessary requirements.

The listed salary range of our beginning rehabilitation counselor positions is \$33,902.40- \$51,376.80. The senior rehabilitation counselor pay range is \$37,389.60-\$56,685.60. Each pay range consists of eighteen steps. Newly hired counselors can start at step three of the eighteen step range, or \$35,589.60, in order to help in recruiting efforts.

Staff Development

Describe the state agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated state unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

1. a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology; and
2. procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

Staff Development and Training: The department has an extensive in-service training program. Each staff member completes a professional development plan (PDP) with his/her supervisor at the time of the annual performance appraisal. The PDP focuses on deficit areas where training is needed to enable an individual to better perform his/her job. The department uses information gathered through the PDP process to develop necessary and appropriate training programs. The department also maintains a departmental training team. This team meets to identify, plan, and coordinate training. A department wide training plan, reviewed by this team on an on-going basis, targets core subjects as well as new topics related to particular job classifications or specialty areas. These topics may include, but are not limited to, the Americans with Disabilities Act, case management, Social Security work incentives, employment development, WIA, medical aspects of disability, assistive technology and multicultural issues.

The department utilizes Registrar? learning management software to track training records for each staff member. This software allows for input from both field and state office staff. Registrar? will track an individual's training record, training dates, and future training needs. Video conferencing is a tool available to serve VR employees statewide. This system has broadened the counselors' ability to participate in training programs without spending time away from their office and consumers while significantly reducing travel costs.

The video conference technology, video on demand capabilities, and internal intranet site allow the department to disseminate information from the federal level to the local level at speeds often much faster than standard personnel meetings and supervisory instruction. Training and program evaluation staff are utilizing the SharePoint platform as a training tool. Although instructor led training will continue to be important, these technologies do have definite benefits when timing is critical.

The department's Leadership Training Institute (LTI) has been continuously changed and updated since 1994 to include new approaches and concepts of leadership. This training, offered seven times since its inception has proven to sufficiently meet the changing needs of the department by preparing staff to fill vacant leadership positions statewide.

The RSA technical assistance and continuing education (TACE) regional partnership offers web based courses for continuing education opportunities and works with ADRS leadership to develop specific training to address policy and procedure changes in the VR program.

The State Department of Personnel offers supervisory training in the areas of performance appraisal, progressive discipline, FMLA, sexual harassment, employment law, interview and selection, and the dynamics of supervision. A portion of these trainings are required for all new supervisors.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

Describe how the designated state unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.

Communication with diverse populations: ADRS maintains regular communication with programs providing specialized training in the areas of deafness and blindness. Communication is maintained with Western Oregon University to train staff in the area of deafness. Staff members serving the deaf and hard of hearing populations attend an annual training conference to address issues relative to deaf services and to meet with students at the Alabama School for the Deaf. The department also remains actively involved with Mississippi State University's blind program. Mississippi State also assists the blind programs with consumer satisfaction surveys. Staff members serving the blind and low vision populations attend training programs annually to address issues relative to blind services. The department possesses Braille and large print producing capabilities in local offices to address the needs of Braille and large print users. UbiDuos are available in the reception areas of all local offices and resource rooms to assist staff and consumers with communication and hearing difficulties.

ADRS has partnered with Alabama A&M University to target and recruit candidates for the rehabilitation counseling program in either the blindness or deafness tract. This two year Master's program includes the second year in Mississippi or Tennessee for the specialized training. Priority to receive the RSA scholarship will be given to students interested in pursuing sensory specialties. Also, ADRS rehabilitation counselors with general caseloads, but with an interest in working with consumers with sensory impairments, may qualify for specialty training through the RSA in-service training grant.

ADRS applicants and eligible individuals who speak limited English can be provided interpreters or are encouraged to access the Language Line. The ADRS consumer guide has been translated into Spanish. Spanish instruction is being explored by using technology and individual instruction either online or in person for staff.

Coordination of Personnel Development Under the individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

Describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated state unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.

Coordination with IDEA initiatives: Approximately one-third of ADRS cases served and the closures obtained, involve transition students. This year, 12,209 transition students received services and 1,497 were successfully employed. The department continues to strengthen the jointly funded job coach program with 64 local school systems across the state. This program is designed to place students with disabilities who are in their final year of school into competitive jobs in their local communities before they leave school. The program is cooperatively managed by local VR service staff and school system staff and employs 65 full-time job coaches. Students, parents, rehabilitation counselors, local school special and regular education staff, and the job coaches, work together to plan for students' successful and smooth transitions to adult life and work.

ADRS continues efforts to develop and improve transition partnerships, programs and service models to meet the needs of students with more-significant disabilities and overcome barriers to employment and community living. College Prep Program services were offered at five sites around the state, with more than 200 students participating. Collaboration with the Special Education Division of the Department of Education and the Department of Corrections continues as ADRS implements the Prison Transition Initiative for youth with disabilities incarcerated in adult prisons.

ADRS is represented on the State Interagency Transition Team (SITT). This is an interagency work group designed to identify existing interagency barriers to effective transition services and develop appropriate remedies. This group consists of representatives from ADRS, Division of Special Education, Auburn University, University of Alabama, Department of Mental Health, Department of Economic and Community Affairs, Alabama Association of Higher Education and Disability, and the Young Adults in Transition (YAIT) group.

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is annually provided an opportunity to give input about the department's CSPD initiatives. Current and future personnel issues are presented by field services program directors. Detailed information is presented through discussions, handouts and questions and answers. Comments and suggestions are requested at any time throughout the year.

Attachment 4.11(a) Statewide Assessment

Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:

- individuals with most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- individuals with disabilities who are minorities;
- individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program; and
- individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.

Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

ATTACHMENT 4.11(a)

RESULTS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services utilizes a variety of methods to determine the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing in the state. These methods include the following: Staff attends meetings of various consumer groups throughout the state. These meetings include consumer groups related to blindness, deafness, traumatic brain injury, learning disability issues, and other disability groups. Information is also gathered from Client Satisfaction Surveys. In FY 2010, Auburn University conducted a client satisfaction survey for the Agency's general services program, i.e, on consumers with disabilities other than hearing or visual. Dr. Doug Watson of Communications Plus conducted a survey of consumer satisfaction among deaf and hard of hearing consumers of agency services. The Mississippi State Rehabilitation and a Research Center on Low Vision and Blindness did a satisfaction survey on agency consumers with visual impairments.

Public hearings are conducted throughout the state on an annual basis to gather information about the vocational needs of individuals with disabilities in the state. The agency also has local advisory groups throughout the state that provide information on a local basis about various rehabilitation needs. Also, the Agency interacts with State of Alabama Client Assistance Program to gather information about unmet vocational rehabilitation needs. Finally, information is gathered from members of the State Rehabilitation Council about the needs of individuals with disabilities in Alabama.

While the agency uses a variety of methods to determine the needs, a triennial needs assessment is conducted. It is jointly conducted with the State Rehabilitation Council. In fact the study mentioned below conducted by Auburn University was in conjunction Dr. Dave Martin of Auburn, who is also the chair of the State Rehabilitation Council. The agency contracted with Auburn University in FY 2011 to conduct a statewide needs assessment of the vocational rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities in the state. Auburn University personnel met with the agency Commissioner on June 10, 2011 to review the findings of the report.

Vocational Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities, Including Their Needs for Supported Employment Services

The vocational rehabilitation needs of the most significantly disabled included: (1) Employment. Under this umbrella of "Employment" comes related matters such as job search assistance, job placement, and supported employment opportunities, (2) job training, (3) technology, (4) transportation.

Vocational Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals Who are Minorities and Individuals Who Have Been Unserved or Underserved

The top five vocational rehabilitation needs in this category are: (1) job placement (2) job search assistance, (3) supported employment opportunities, (4) job retention services and (5) technology services. Again, this group expressed similar issues as seen in the "most significantly disabled" group. The employment issues appear most important.

Vocational Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Served Through Components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System

The vocational rehabilitation needs of those served in the career centers included: (1) employment, (2) job search and job placement services, (3) on-the-job training.

Another issue noted for the Client Satisfaction Survey conducted by Auburn University was the availability of the counselor to the consumer. A significant number of responders noted that the counselor may be difficult to reach. Large caseloads were cited as a possible reason for this situation. It can be expected this would be an issue for all three groups delineated above.

The Need to Establish, Develop or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs within the State

As the agency moves toward serving the more disabled consumer, there may be need for the Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) to enhance capacity to evaluate the more disabled consumer. Also, there is a need for short term training programs to meet labor market needs examples might include Certified Nursing Assistant or forklift operator.

As the agency makes efforts to expand supported employment, there will be a need to develop supported employment opportunities and methods of long term support. CRPs may well be able to assist in this area.

Another area of service need is serving people with autism. CRPs can play a role in expanding services to this population.

Attachment 4.11(b) Annual Estimates

- Identify the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services.
- Identify the number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds under:
 - Part B of Title I;
 - Part B of Title VI;
 - Each priority category, if under an order of selection.
- Identify the cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

It is estimated 25,000 people with disabilities will be eligible for services under the plan.

It is estimated 29,000 people with disabilities will be served under Part B of Title I and 760 people with disabilities will be served under Part B of Title IV of the Rehabilitation Act.

It is estimated \$70,000,000 will be expended under Title I and \$2,000,000 expended under Title IV.

Category	Title I or Title	Estimated Funds	Estimated Number	Average Cost of
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	VI		to be Served	Services
Part B of title I	Title I	\$70,000,000	29,000	\$2,413
Part of title VI	Title VI	\$2,000,000	760	\$2,631
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
Totals		\$72,000,000	29,760	\$2,419

Attachment 4.11(c)(1) State Goals and Priorities

The goals and priorities are based on the comprehensive statewide assessment, on requirements related to the performance standards and indicators, and on other information about the state agency. (See section 101(a)(15)(C) of the Act.) This attachment should be updated when there are material changes in the information that require the description to be amended.

- Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.
- Identify if the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, jointly reviewed the goals and priorities and jointly agreed to any revisions.
- Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.
- Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
 - the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;

- the performance of the state on standards and indicators; and
- other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

Based on the Statewide Needs Assessment and the other methods of gathering information about the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities described in Attachment 4.11(a), the agency, in conjunction with the State Rehabilitation Council, will establish the following as goals and priorities:

Goal 1: Job Placement Services. The agency will accomplish sufficient outcomes that meet quality standards to achieve Performance Indicator 1.1.

Goal 2: Vocational Training. The agency will increase by 5% the number of eligible individuals, including minorities, who receive vocational training.

Goal 3: Rehab Technology Services. The agency will increase by 5% the number of individuals that receive assistive technology throughout the rehabilitation process.

Goal 4: Increase availability of counselors to consumers. The agency will develop strategies to keep caseloads at levels that will ensure counselors have adequate time to interact effectively with consumers.

Goal 5 Expand the agency's supported employment program, including the increase of long term supports.

Attachment 4.11(c)(3) Order of Selection

- Identify the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services.
- Identify the justification for the order.
- Identify the service and outcome goals.
- Identify the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
- Describe how individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities.

This agency is not implementing an Order of Selection.

Attachment 4.11(c)(4) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds

Specify the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under section 622 of the Act for the provision of supported employment services.

GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION FOR TITLE VI PART B FUNDS

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) has an extensive history and commitment to providing supported employment within the state. Currently, ADRS matches Supported Employment State Grant funds at a ratio of four to one. The Department anticipates continuing this level of funding for FY 2013.

ADRS distributes supported employment funds to its rehabilitation counselors who in turn purchase needed supported employment services through a network of approved vendors utilizing a Milestones outcome based payment system. This process provides payments to authorized supported employment providers for assisting individuals in reaching Milestones toward successful employment. These agencies are reimbursed for the following Milestones:

1. Milestone 1: Determination of Needs (20% of total) (Discovery Profile can be added)
2. Job Development and Hire (20 % of total)
3. Job Coaching and Retention (25 % of total)
4. Successful Closure (Employment Stability for 90 days) (35% of total)

Each provider receives funding based on the number of individuals served and closed successfully in competitive employment. Provider goals are based upon past performance, input from the ADRS liaison counselor, and the estimated need for supported employment services in each service area of the state. The Department's goal for FY 2013 is to serve 760 individuals in supported employment, with an estimated 300 of these individuals obtaining competitive, integrated employment in their community. Supported employment services are provided utilizing an individualized, customer driven approach, encompassing each person's individual support needs to ensure an appropriate and successful job match.

Additionally, The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services is committed to increasing successful supported employment outcomes through collaboration with other agencies and organizations. ADRS is currently participating in the following collaborative efforts:

- Completion of regional trainings with DMH employees, community agency service providers and ADRS staff on their Employment First Training beginning in June 2012. The purpose of this training is to better understand existing agency requirements in regard to application, eligibility and supported employment, and to promote Employment First as a practice to DMH staff. Employment First practices to be implemented by DMH case managers following the training.
- Continuation of Certificate Based Training in collaboration with Alabama APSE, The Network on Employment. This training ensures consistency of service delivery for supported employment providers and provides access to the latest marketing and training techniques. Training is provided by Virginia Commonwealth University's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports.
- In collaboration with the Alabama Department of Mental Health, the Alabama Department of Education, the Developmental Disabilities Council and Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, Project Search, based in Cincinnati Ohio, will be implemented as a fully immersed transition program for students in their exiting year of high school. This year long internship offers unique highly skilled

employment opportunities to students with the most significant disabilities. We will pilot this program with two employers and two school systems with the expectation of adding additional sites the following year.

- We have added six new SE vendors and expanded service coverage to an additional five vendors in order to provide service to un-served and underserved areas in our state. We anticipate adding additional vendors next year as we try and expand services to those clients previously served in sheltered workshops who will be moving to community based employment.
- ADRS will collaborate with local school systems to develop and implement a transition initiative, ensuring students who are appropriate for SE services have access to providers prior to their exit from high school. SE providers will be active in the local high schools to present information regarding their programs to parents, students and staff. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in community based assessments before they exit school, to facilitate a seamless transition to Supported Employment Services.
- A Strategic Plan for SE is being completed by Auburn University. It is anticipated that this plan will provide a foundation for specific recommendations to be considered to strengthen Supported Employment in Alabama and the steps required for the implementation of the recommendations.
- Working in collaboration with the Department of Mental Health, we have scheduled meetings with Dartmouth University to explore the Johnson & Johnson-Dartmouth Community Mental Health Program. This evidence based program provides individualized placement and support for adults with serious mental illnesses who are interested in improving their work lives.

Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies

This attachment should include required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the vocational rehabilitation and the supported employment programs. (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Act and Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)).

Describe the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

The sections below will describe methods and strategies to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities in Alabama.

Identify how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process; and describe how assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis.

Strategies to Provide Access to Technology Services and Devices on a Statewide Basis During all Phases of the Rehabilitation Process

The agency has a network of degreed and qualified rehabilitation technology specialists. This team is directed and guided by an individual in the central office who, as a part of their assignment, oversees the activities of this team. This team will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss among

themselves and partner agency staff various advances and new products in rehabilitation technology. These meetings provide vendors the opportunity to demonstrate new and innovative pieces of technology to demonstrate to the team and to keep the counselors informed throughout the agency about new technology. The team will continue its efforts in gathering samples of technology so they can try them out in the workplace to see how they can assist individuals with disabilities in becoming successfully employed.

This team will act as a training agent for other rehabilitation staff throughout the state. Team members will attend unit meetings throughout the state to discuss and demonstrate technology to frontline counseling staff. The team members will also continue to attend national conferences, such as the Assistive Technology Industries Association (ATIA) conference, where they will be exposed to innovative technology. The rehabilitation technology team will continue to present at various conferences throughout the year. This includes the Supported Employment conference, the agency's staff conference, and other conferences as appropriate.

The agency added a rehabilitation technology assistant personnel classification in FY 2011. The rehabilitation technology assistant will work under the direction of the rehabilitation technology specialists and expand the reach and delivery of technology services. One position was filled in FY 2011. Plans are to fill another position in FY 2013.

The agency is utilizing its own technology in an effort to deliver technology information to staff. The agency now has Video on Demand. This is through the agency's training division and provides the opportunity to staff to view various training videos related to technology and other rehabilitation issues.

A technology symposium was conducted at Auburn University May 19-20, 2011. The agency had staff in attendance. Conferences such as this one provide staff with knowledge and information as to how technology can be used during the rehabilitation process.

Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities; and what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

Strategies to Identify and Serve Individuals with Disabilities who are Minorities with the Most Significant Disabilities and to Serve Underserved and Unserved Populations

Services to the deaf: The agency will provide a wide range of services to the deaf population. First, the agency will continue its practice of serving consumers who are deaf through specialty counselors who have sign language skills. These counselors are familiar with the needs of the deaf and are involved in the deaf community, thus able to relate very well to our deaf population.

The agency will continue its use of a network of staff interpreters throughout the state. These interpreters will assist deaf consumers in obtaining various types of services, particularly services from employers. The interpreters are able to establish a link between the employers and consumers who are deaf that are recently hired.

We also will continue to work with a network of deaf support specialists. These specialists assist deaf consumers in various aspects of the rehabilitation process and in getting acclimated to a new employment situation.

The agency will continue to conduct its annual training conference for counselors serving the deaf. A unique aspect of this conference is that students from the Alabama School for the Deaf come to the conference to spend time with the rehabilitation counselors. This interaction is very effective in forging a working alliance between the counselor and consumers who are at the Alabama School for the Deaf.

The agency will continue its active involvement in the One-Stop Career Center system involving deaf consumers. The agency has established a Video Interpreting Network so that when a consumer who is deaf comes through the career center an interpreter will be available.

Troy University, in Troy, Alabama in partnership with ADRS, the Department of Mental Health and the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, has established an interpreter for the deaf training program. The agency is establishing internships for these students within the agency. This will increase the supply of interpreters and eventually mean more support for deaf consumers. In conjunction with this, the agency is attempting to establish a "professional trainee" position. These students would occupy these positions for one year, then transition into employment with the agency.

The agency will continue its activities through the interagency agreement that has been established with higher education institutions throughout the state. This agreement delineates the specific responsibilities of the agency and that of each institution of higher education for individuals who are deaf.

"Pah!" Job Club is a week-long intensive job readiness training that covers topics from employability skills, personal skills, and career exploration strategies.

College Prep will be conducted and designed to equip college-bound high school seniors with the tools, resources and strategies necessary for self-directed problem solving and the achievement of college goals. Traditionally, the program has been held at Jacksonville State University but plans are in the works to expand to Troy University as well.

A Deaf-Blind Symposium will be held that will focus on employment, technology, and rehabilitation needs of deaf-blind consumers.

The agency will utilize the Deaf Advisory Committee to help shape ADRS policy in terms of service provision to the deaf community. It also serves as an advocate to legislatures and other state officials and is a subcommittee of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

Services for the blind: The agency maintains an excellent service delivery system to consumers who are blind or visually impaired. A network of rehabilitation counselors for the blind, rehabilitation teachers, and orientation and mobility specialists provide these services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Additionally, there is a State Office specialist who oversees blind services. The agency provides a unique range of services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

A technology symposium is conducted on an annual basis that provides staff serving the blind and visually impaired and consumers the opportunity to view a wide range of technology related to visual impairment and individuals who are deaf-blind. The symposium was conducted during FY 2011 and approximately 357 individuals attended.

Expand summer work program to include college students.

The agency is cooperating with the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) School of Optometry in a research project entitled "Transferability of Virtual Reality Training to Real World Settings in Patients with Low Vision." This project will attempt to demonstrate how virtual reality can be utilized to teach orientation and mobility skills.

The agency is cooperating with the Mississippi State University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision in a customized transportation project. The project seeks to develop and evaluate a new intervention addressing transportation barriers to employment for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Transition events designed to assist blind and visually impaired high school students, their parents and their teachers in becoming familiar with resources that would facilitate the student's transitioning from high school to post-secondary training and then to employment are provided in three regions of the state. Students in public high schools and the Alabama School for the Blind participated in SCENARIO CITY, an active program using a simulated city to introduce students to various scenarios that they may encounter in real life. The purpose of the event is to teach problem solving, critical thinking, and good decision making skills. Local businesses, such as Regions Bank and Walgreens, also participate in the event which enhances their awareness of the abilities of the students.

ADRS has partnered with Central Alabama Community College and the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind to offer a comprehensive approach in providing a support system to students that have a visual or hearing loss that are interested in attending college. This Dual Enrollment Program involves the campuses of the Alabama School for the Deaf, the Alabama School for the Blind and the EH Gentry Rehabilitation Facility for individuals that are blind and deaf as well as

the various campuses under the community college program. Central Alabama Community College offers dual enrollment to visually impaired and hearing impaired high school students and graduates needing assistance to be successful in college.

Services to Veterans: The agency has an active program in serving military veterans. The agency will continue utilizing the network of rehabilitation counselors around the state who serve as liaisons to the rehabilitation counselors of the Veterans Administration. These agency counselors receive referrals on veterans and initiate the vocational rehabilitation process to assist them in entering employment.

The agency has established a state office position, the duties of which will include the oversight of veteran referrals and the monitoring of their progress through the VR process.

The agency receives referrals from an organization in Huntsville, Alabama known as Still Serving Veterans. This organization assists veterans in returning to civilian life. The agency has completed an

interagency agreement and will work cooperatively in processing referrals to assist veterans who may need employment services.

The agency completed an interagency agreement with the Veterans Administration in Montgomery, Alabama to formalize the referral process referenced above. That agreement is still in effect.

Services to Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): The agency has an active program in serving individuals with traumatic brain injury. The agency will utilize a staff person who oversees various grants related to traumatic brain injury. The agency has a task force related to brain injury. It includes members of various social service organizations who may have contact with individuals who have traumatic brain injury. This organization meets on a quarterly basis for the exchange of information which will benefit services to individuals with traumatic brain injury. The agency has a network of TBI care coordinators located strategically throughout the state. The role of the care coordinator is to receive the initial referral of someone with a brain injury, then assist the individual and family in accessing the state's network of services for persons with TBI. This includes services of the agency and services of other agencies. Alabama has two specialty caseloads in Mobile and Birmingham dedicated to serving individuals with TBI. These two counselors also serve as a resource to other counselors in the state who may receive a TBI referral.

Services to Minorities: Over the past three years 44.3% of the cases served and 40.8% of the cases closed rehabilitated in the agency were minorities. The population of the state is approximately 33% minority. Consequently, minority numbers are well represented in the agency's service delivery system. Nevertheless, outreach efforts will continue at the local level to be sure that minorities are aware of agency services and programs. The agency has a staff member specifically related to diversity. This individual has completed a diversity plan which has been approved by the administration of the agency. This plan indicates the strategies to hire minority staff to work within the agency. The agency conducted diversity training for all agency staff. This training addressed the needs of diverse consumers the agency serves.

Another effort of outreach to minorities is through a grant which the agency has from the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR). DHR requested agency assistance in providing placement services for hard to place individuals. The grant was given to the agency and individuals were hired utilizing those grant service funds to specifically work with this population. The agency is receiving referrals on many of these individuals who have a significant impediment to employment and may be in need of vocational rehabilitation services.

Services to Individuals in Supported Employment Programs: The agency recognizes a critical factor in a successful supported employment is long-term supports. The agency will continue its dialogue with state and private entities that can be involved in the provision of extended services for supported employment consumers.

The agency has hired a specialist whose only responsibility is overseeing the expansion and effectiveness of the agency's supported employment efforts. The agency is developing a new functional definition of individuals with the "most significant disabilities" (MSD).

Services to Individuals with Autism: Autism is an emerging disability with increasing numbers requesting services from the public rehabilitation program. This holds true for Alabama. Staff has participated in several training programs during the current fiscal year related to autism. It is expected this will continue in FY 2013. Also, a staff member has been hired in the state office whose job description will be to develop and enhance the agency's autism program. The state also participates on a legislative task force related to autism services.

The agency has initiated a new approach to provide consultation to supported employment projects and CRPs who need technical assistance and support in serving individuals with autism. This effort is intended to build capacity within our existing provider network. We have identified Triumph, Inc., a successful supported employment provider for individuals with autism, to serve as the consulting organization. Triumph has been added as a vendor to provide supported employment services.

If applicable, identify plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the state.

Strategy to Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP)

As the agency moves toward serving the more significantly disabled, there may be the need to enhance the assessment and evaluation capability of CRPs. Two potential areas of Community Rehabilitation Program improvement were noted: increased availability of comprehensive learning disability evaluations and services to individuals with autism.

One strategy to expand learning disability evaluations will be to attempt to utilize existing learning disability projects to train other Community Rehabilitation Program staff. The sharing of knowledge and practices will assist the agency in expanding this service.

The agency will invite CRP staff to specific trainings in order to improve and elevate skills of CRP employees.

The agency will maintain a specific four person division devoted to working as liaisons to the state's Community Rehabilitation Programs and supported employment projects. This staff provides CRPs with regular information about the needs of agency consumers.

Describe strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators.

Performance on Performance Indicator 1.1

The agency successfully rehabilitated 4,547 individuals with disabilities in FY 2011, 520 less than in FY 2010. The agency has placed an expanded emphasis on quality of outcomes and provision of services to a standard, as opposed to primarily high outcome numbers. The agency has taken steps to reduce caseload size and develop more realistic outcome expectations coupled with a greater emphasis on quality.

Improvement on Indicator 1.1 The following strategies will be implemented in order to improve on Indicator 1.1:

Maintain Manageable Caseload Size: It is anticipated that the reduction in caseload size will give counselors more time to work with individuals with more significant disabilities. Reduced caseloads will allow counselors more time to devote to both the quality and quantity of outcomes. The agency has included a new state goal of the number of individuals who retain employment one year following closure. Should caseload sizes become too large, efforts will be made to hire additional counselors. If that should not be possible, Order of Selection will be considered.

Electronic Recruiting: The agency continues use of the Alabama Business Leadership Employment (ABLE) Network. This is an electronic recruiting tool to be used by employers to hire agency consumers for jobs. Counselors place job ready consumers in an applicant pool of the ABLE system. Employers can use the system to review the qualifications of agency consumers for jobs. Confidentiality of consumer identification is protected by the use of a distinct case number rather than the consumer's personal identifying information. This system may improve placements by allowing direct recruiting by employers.

Use of Agencies Business Intelligence and Dashboards: The agency has developed electronic dashboards that are available to VR staff. These dashboards provide up-to-date data on the individual caseloads of each counselor. Counselors can review items such as activity due on a case, progress toward annual goals, time in status and other information to help manage the caseload. Use of this data will allow the counselor to manage the caseload more effectively and efficiently.

Skills, Employability, Assets (SEA) Page in SMILE: The agency updated its electronic casework system, SMILE (System for Managing Information on the Leading Edge) in FY 2010. The SEA page is a repository for information about the consumer's job related skills, employability characteristics, and overall assets related to employment. This information is collected and eventually dropped into the ABLE system described above. This information will enhance the consumer's possibility of being recruited through the ABLE system.

High Performer Practices: Individual counselor performance data will be reviewed at the completion of FY 2012; specifically, the number of successful placements that meet the quality standards of wages, benefits and job retention a year post closure. The agency will then invite high performing counselors to a forum to identify effective work habits and casework practices to be shared with all counselors.

Review of Agency Business Relations Program: The agency will review its Business Relations Program in FY 2013 to evaluate effectiveness and determine if improvement can be made.

Improvement on Performance Indicator 1.5: The average hourly wage in Alabama was \$10.44. The average hourly wage of VR consumers closed in FY 2011 was \$9.70. The RSA standard is .52, Alabama's was .49. Alabama has historically served a high percentage of transition cases. These students frequently go to work at entry level wages. This fact, as well as a 9% unemployment rate impacts this indicator.

Strategies to improve this indicator will include targeting higher wage jobs, particularly as it relates to federal hiring. The agency has scheduled a Summit for federal contractors on August 21, 2012. ADRS unit supervisors will attend and get a good perspective of federal contractor hiring possibilities. Many of these jobs will be above minimum wage. Also, Business Relations Consultants will be asked to carefully

search for higher paying jobs as they contact employers. We will train counselors on means of obtaining labor market information.

Describe strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

Strategies for Assisting Components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System in Assisting Individuals with Disabilities

The agency maintains a very productive relationship with the Workforce System of Alabama. First, the Commissioner of the agency sits on the Statewide Workforce Board. Consequently, the Statewide Workforce Board has a voice at the table for the needs and issues of individuals with disabilities.

The agency has counselors stationed on a permanent basis in One-Stop Career Centers in several of the larger cities in the state. These staff receives referrals and also provides advice and information to other staff in the One-Stop Career Centers on how to serve individuals with disabilities.

The agency will have numerous staff participate in the annual Workforce Conference that is conducted in the state each year, involving all partners and other service providers related to the Statewide Workforce Investment System. The agency sits on the planning council of this conference so that various breakout sessions related to the needs of individuals with disabilities are included on the agenda.

Lastly, as mentioned previously, the agency has established a Video Interpreting Network. Should a deaf individual come into the local One-Stop Career Center, a video interpreting situation can be set up for that individual to be served.

Describe how the agency's strategies will be used to:

- achieve goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1);
- support innovation and expansion activities; and
- 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.

Strategies to Achieve Goals and Priorities Identified in Attachment 4.11(c) (1)

Goal 1: The agency will accomplish sufficient outcomes that meet quality standards to achieve Performance Indicator 1.1.

The most recent RSA 107 Review indicated that the agency was performing at a very high level with large caseloads and an extremely high rate of successful closures in the agency. Alabama ranked 10th in the nation among VR Combined agencies in regards to successful outcomes in FY 2009. This despite the fact Alabama ranks 23 in population. The agency's leadership, beginning in FY 2009, noted these issues and initiated greater emphasis towards quality standards of employment outcomes rather than primarily measuring quantity of outcomes. Consequently, the bar is in the process of being reset in

regard to successful outcomes expectations of agency rehabilitation counselors. Nevertheless, the agency recognizes the purpose of the VR program is to place people with disabilities into employment. The following strategies will be utilized to accomplish Goal 1.

Electronic Recruiting: The agency is using an electronic recruiting entitled the Alabama Business Leadership Employment (ABLE) Network. This is an electronic recruiting tool to be used by employers to hire agency consumers for jobs. Counselors will place job ready consumers in an applicant pool in the ABLE system. Employers can use the system to review the qualifications of agency consumers for jobs. Confidentiality of consumer identification is protected by the use of a distinct case number rather than the consumer's personal identifying information. This system may improve placements by allowing direct recruiting by employers.

Skills, Employ ability, Assets (SEA) Page in SMILE: The agency has updated its electronic casework system, SMILE (System for Managing Information on the Leading Edge), in FY 2009. The SEA page is a repository for information about the consumer's job related skills, employability characteristics, and overall assets related to employment. This information is collected by the counselor and deposited into the ABLE system described above. This information will enhance the consumer's possibility of being recruited through the ABLE system.

High Performer Practices: Individual counselor performance data will be reviewed at the completion of FY 2011; specifically, the number of successful placements that meet the quality standards of wages, benefits and job retention a year post closure. The agency will then invite high performing counselors to a forum to identify effective work habits and casework practices to be shared with all counselors.

Review of Agency Business Relations Program: The agency will review its Business Relations Program in FY 2012 to evaluate effectiveness and determine if improvements can be made.

Self-Employment Training for VR Staff: Self-employment is a viable employment option for some VR consumers. The agency conducted self-employment training for selected VR staff in 2006. There have been significant staff changes since that time. It is appropriate now to train new staff on possibilities presented by self-employment. A new state office specialist was hired in the summer of 2011. A significant portion of that person's duties will be related to self-employment.

Goal 2: The agency will increase by 5% the number of eligible individuals, including minorities, who receive some type of vocational training.

Some of these same strategies utilized to accomplish Goal 1 will be utilized to accomplish this goal. This includes additional initial assessment of the individual to see what types of training may be appropriate for the individual. The concept will be for the counselor to provide guidance and counseling related to additional training and typically higher entry level wages.

Another strategy will involve gathering baseline data about the number of consumers currently involved in training. This data will be looked at on a statewide basis and also on an individual unit basis throughout the state. This will provide information as to which units and caseloads are providing training to consumers.

A survey of rehabilitation counseling staff will be conducted to gather information about their knowledge of training availability in their local areas.

Efforts will then be made to gather information about training opportunities available throughout the state. This information will then be placed into a database and placed on the agency's intranet for access by rehabilitation counselors when they are discussing vocational goals and training opportunities for consumers.

Labor market information will be gathered and shared with counseling staff about projections for future career opportunities within the state. This will assist the counselors in directing consumers towards training that will lead towards prompt employment.

The agency will utilize its core group of Business Relations Consultants to assist in identifying businesses that will provide internship (training) opportunities for consumers. Internships and on-the-job training opportunities are excellent methods to assist consumers in getting needed training, immediate employment, and also an increase in the average starting wage of the consumers of the agency.

Goal 3: The agency will increase by 5% the number of individuals that receive assistive technology throughout the rehabilitation process.

Strategies to accomplish this goal include the following:

First, we will gather data about the provision of technology on a statewide and unit basis. This will provide us with information to analyze areas where technology is being distributed and utilized.

We will continue to utilize our core of rehabilitation technology specialists to provide assistance to counselors in analyzing the rehabilitation technology needs of consumers. We will continue to be involved in activities such as the Technology Symposium for the Blind which was first conducted in Talladega, Alabama in FY 2011 and is now being conducted on an annual basis.

The agency created a rehabilitation technology classification in FY 2011. One position has been filled with plans to add a second position this year. The rehab technology assistants will work under the direction of the rehabilitation technology specialists and expand the reach and delivery of technology services.

The rehabilitation counselors will be surveyed to determine what their training needs are as it relates to rehabilitation technology. Then, that training will be provided as appropriate.

The agency will monitor rehabilitation service data monthly to determine the progress towards this goal.

The agency will utilize the agency's Video on Demand technology opportunities for staff training on rehabilitation technology.

Goal 4: The agency will develop strategies to keep caseloads at level that will ensure counselors have adequate time to interact effectively with consumers.

The average caseload size in prior to FY 2010 was 225. An issue cited in agency client satisfaction surveys is the availability of agency counselors to consumers. A decision was made in FY 2010 to close cases that

after repeated attempts the individual had lost contact with VR or otherwise no longer participating in services. The average caseload size on September 30th of FY 2010 was 138. The average caseload size on September 30th of FY 2011 was 135.

Strategies that kept caseloads to a manageable level included the following. The agency has emphasized to counselors the careful assessment of vocational rehabilitation needs of applicants. This was to ensure the applicant was in real need of agency services. The agency in no way denies services to eligible consumers; however, the agency wants to ensure eligibility is based on a substantial impediment to employment and that the individual with a disability requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment. Driven by numbers, counselors previously may have accepted cases that could have effectively been served by other workforce or employment entities. The agency has developed a Business System to more effectively manage caseloads.

Goal 5: Expand the agency's supported employment program, including the increase of long term supports.

- Completion of regional trainings with DMH employees, community agency service providers and ADRS staff on their Employment First Training beginning in June 2012. The purpose of this training is to better understand existing agency requirements in regard to application, eligibility and supported employment, and to promote Employment First as a practice to DMH staff. Employment first practices to be implemented by DMH case managers following the training.
- Continuation of Certificate Based Training (job coach training) in collaboration with Alabama Association of Persons in Supported Employment (APSE), The Network on Employment. This training ensures consistency of service delivery for supported employment providers and provides access to the latest marketing and training techniques. Training is provided by Virginia Commonwealth University's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports.
- In collaboration with the Alabama Department of Mental Health, the Alabama Department of Education, the Developmental Disabilities Council and Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, Project Search, based in Cincinnati Ohio, will be implemented as a fully immersed transition program for students in their exiting year of high school. This year long internship offers unique highly skilled employment opportunities to students with the most significant disabilities. We will pilot this program with two employers and two school systems with the expectation of adding additional sites the following year.
- We have added six new SE vendors and expanded service coverage to an additional five vendors in order to provide service to un-served and underserved areas in our state. We anticipate adding additional vendors next year as we try and expand services to those clients previously served in sheltered workshops who will be moving to community based employment.
- ADRS will collaborate with local school systems to develop and implement a transition initiative; ensuring students who are appropriate for SE services have access to providers prior to their exit from high school. SE providers will be active in the local high schools to present information regarding their programs to parents, students and staff. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in

community based assessments before they exit schools, to facilitate a seamless transition to Supported Employment Services.

- A Strategic Plan for SE is being completed by Auburn University. It is anticipated that this plan will provide a foundation for specific recommendations to be considered to strengthen Supported Employment in Alabama and the steps required for the implementation of the recommendations.

Working in collaboration with the Department of Mental Health, we have scheduled meetings with Dartmouth University to explore the Johnson & Johnson-Dartmouth Community Mental Health Program. This evidence based program provides individualized placement and support for adults with serious mental illnesses who are interested in improving their work lives.

Strategies to accomplish this goal will include special training for staff on supported employment. Efforts will be made to expand the number of entities providing supported employment services. Collaborative efforts will be made to address the issue of long term supports in supported employment. This will include a review of how other states address this issue.

USES OF INNOVATION AND EXPANSION FUNDS

The agency will utilize a portion of funds allotted to the state for the following innovation and expansion activities in FY 2013.

Succession Planning: The agency is experiencing retirements as a result of baby boomers aging and the loss of personnel due to other frequent reasons for separation. This includes staff in upper management positions. It is important that staff in other management positions be prepared to assume roles of increasing responsibility. The agency will conduct its Leadership Training Institute prepare staff for leadership positions in the future.

The agency will expand its Business Intelligence initiative. The plan is to hire an additional person in the computer services division who will be assigned to Business Intelligence.

Expansion of the agency's training capacity for blind consumers through utilization of specialized training facilities, such as the Louisiana Center for the Blind.

Summer work programs for the blind will be conducted in order to allow students who are blind to experience the world of work.

The development of expanded center based services for the blind in order to provide services closer to an individual's home.

Self-employment is a very viable opportunity, particularly in the current economy. Training will be conducted for a counselor in each unit to serve as resource for other counselors in the unit regarding self-employment.

The agency has initiated a new approach to provide consultation to supported employment projects and CRPs who need technical assistance and support in serving individuals with autism. This effort is intended to build capacity within our existing provider network. We have identified Triumph Inc., a

successful supported employment provider for persons with autism, to serve as the consulting organization. We are currently piloting this program in two locations in Alabama.

Additional funding to expand the effectiveness of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

Expansion of services to the Deaf-Blind population through a cooperative effort with the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind.

Expansion of services to the deaf by hiring two additional deaf support specialists.

Addition of two rehabilitation audiologists to expand availability of rehabilitation audiology services.

Staff serving the deaf will attend the Southeastern Regional Institute on Deafness (SERID) to increase knowledge and capacity to serve individuals who are deaf.

Attachment 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) Goals

1. Clearly identify all VR program goals consistent with the goals described in the FY 2011 Attachment 4.11(c)(1), including an evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals were achieved.

- Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

Goal 1: The agency will accomplish sufficient successful outcomes in order to achieve Performance Indicator 1.1

The agency accomplished 4,547 successful closures in FY 2011. This was 520 less than in the previous year, FY 2010.

Factors affecting accomplishment of this goal are as follows.

First, Alabama's unemployment rate during FY 2011 averaged 9.25%. This has affected the availability of job opportunities for our consumers, particularly those who are trying to find entry level employment. Second, due to a significant number of retirements with a number of staff aging out in their careers, we had a significant number of vacancies during FY 2011. The agency hired 25 new counselors FY 2011, which is approximately 16% of the counseling staff. As expected, it takes time to get new counseling staff up to productivity level of older staff. Third, due to turnover in the last several years, we have a significant number of young counselors who are gaining experience. The agency recently conducted a "Booth Camp" for new counselors. The training included counselors with three or less years of experience. It should be noted that there were 47 counselors in the training. This is nearly one-third of our 155 counselors. Further, we had a number of vacancies in our Business Relations Consultants program during FY 2011. These are individuals who call employers to locate job opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Vacancies in this area of specialty left several parts of the state without a person dedicated to identifying and locating job opportunities.

Goal 2: The agency will increase by 5% the number of eligible individuals, including minorities who receive some type of vocational training.

The agency had an 8.7% decrease in individual area training during FY 2011. Factors affecting this decrease would include the following. First, the agency, in keeping with the effort to serve those who genuinely need a vocational rehabilitation program, completed 1,306 less IPEs during FY 2011. This is a 15.8% decrease in plans. This is an overall part of the agency's effort to keep caseloads at a manageable level by accepting individuals who need a Comprehensive Rehabilitation Program. Also, during FY 2010, stimulus funds were used to fund on-the-job training, paid internships, paid work experiences, and on-the-job evaluations. We saw a decrease in each of these areas during FY 2011. Counselors noted that in the on-the-job training situations, once training funds were exhausted on the part of the agency, the individual frequently lost employment. Therefore, the counselor was reluctant to continue some of these on-the-job training experiences. It is noted that the agency saw an increase in the number of individuals receiving college or university training. There was also an increase in the area of vocational school training. There was a drop of 7% of individuals enrolled in training for non-minorities and 10% for minorities. Certainly, the filling of the counselor vacancies described above impacted this situation. The agency does not have permission from the Governor's office to fill vacancies as they occur. We are required to wait until a number of vacancies have accumulated to send a critical needs letter to the Governor's office for permission to hire. These delays in filling counselor vacancies in a timely manner which has certainly impacted this goal.

Goal 3: Rehabilitation Technology Services

The agency will increase by 5% the number of individuals that receive assistive technology throughout the rehabilitation process. The agency did obtain this goal. In FY 2010, 1,243 individuals received technology services. In FY 2011, 1,328 individuals received technology services. This is an increase of 6.8%.

Factors contributing to the achievement of this goal include the following.

The agency has increased availability of rehabilitation technology services in north Alabama after hiring a technologist in the Huntsville, Alabama area. Secondly, the increasing demand for technology services by consumers, particularly college students. Computers are becoming essential for college students and the agency is providing more than previously. An adequate computer for college students can cost less than books for a semester. Third, we are seeing new forms of technology that open accessibility doors for people with disabilities. Examples include iPads, iphones, new adaptive driving technology to name a few.

Goal 4: Increase Availability of Counselors to Consumers: The agency will develop strategies to keep caseloads at levels that will ensure counselors have adequate time to interact effectively with consumers.

Factors contributing to the achievement of this goal include the following.

At the end of FY 2010, the average caseload was 138. At the end of FY 2011, the average caseload was 135. Strategies which kept these caseloads at a manageable level during FY 2011 included the following:

First, counselors carefully reviewed applicants to ensure that they were in need of a Comprehensive Rehabilitation Program. For example, if consumers only needed a job placement and no other rehabilitation services, they were referred to the Career Center rather than being taken into the caseload. No one was excluded who needed a Comprehensive Rehabilitation Program, but consumers needing a single service were referred to other agencies that may provide that type of service.

Also, counselors did some amount of caseload cleanup of inactive consumers with whom the agency has lost contact. Also, the agency worked diligently to get counselor vacancies filled so that we could keep the counselors-to-cases ratio reasonable. This involved good communication with the State Finance Director who gives permission to hire additional staff.

Goal 5: Expand the agency's Supported Employment Program including the Long-Term Supports

The agency achieved a portion of the supported employment goal. The FY 2011 goal was to serve 450 consumers in supported employment. The agency served. In FY 2011,746 consumers in supported employment. The closure goal was 300.

The service goal was reached by expanding the expanding the number of agencies providing supported employment services. Also, additional staff training on supported employment was a factor in achieving the service goal.

A number of factors caused the closure goal to be missed by 14. First, Alabama is still negatively impacted by the recession. The Alabama unemployment rate averaged 9.25% during FY 2011. Second, we have a large number of new counselors who are learning about availability of supported employment and who is appropriate it. Lastly, the April 2011 devastating tornados that struck Alabama impacted employers who were hiring consumers for supported employment, thus eliminating some supported employment opportunities.

2. Identify all supported employment program goals consistent with the goals described in Attachment 4.11(c)(4), including an evaluation of the extent to which the supported employment program goals were achieved.

- Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

Expand the agency's Supported Employment Program including the Long-Term Supports

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we have a large number of new counselors who are learning about availability of supported employment and who is appropriate it. Lastly, the April 2011 devastating tornados that struck Alabama impacted employers who were hiring consumers for supported employment, thus eliminating some supported employment opportunities.

3. Provide an Assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY 2011.

STANDARDS AND INDICATORS – FY 2011

INDICATOR STANDARD ALABAMA

1.1 > 5,969 4,547

1.2 > = 55.8% 58.5%

1.3 > = 72.6% 98.3%

1.4 > = 62.4% 83.0%

1.5 > = .52 49.8%

1.6 > = 53.0 80.2%

2.1 > = .80 1.0

The agency met all performance indicators except 1.1 and 1.5.

Indicator 1.1 There was a reduction in the number of successful closures in FY 2011. This was a result of a continued unemployment rate of 9% in the state. Also, the agency had significant turnover in the counseling staff having hired 25 new counselors during FY 2011.

Indicator 1.5 The agency did not meet indicator 1.5. The agency has placed a great deal of emphasis on Transition cases which typically start to work at entry level wages. Additionally, the unemployment rate has crowded the labor market at higher paying jobs. Alabama's unemployment rate hovered at around 9% during FY 2011.

4. Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in FY 2011.

Innovation and Expansion

Innovation and expansion funds were used for the following during FY 2011. Three staff members were devoted to the development and expansion of the agency's Business Intelligence initiative. This included two rehabilitation specialists and one rehabilitation computer programmer. These individuals developed the Dashboards which are now being utilized by field staff to provide data for caseload management.

The agency expanded its services by continued utilization of the Louisiana Center for the Blind. We are having additional consumers requesting to go to the Louisiana Center for the Blind for blind training services.

The agency expanded participation in the United States Business Leadership Network (USBLN). Two staff members attended the USBLN meeting in Kentucky. This included the Director of the agency's employment program, Mrs. Peggy Anderson, and one of our Business Relations Consultants, Ms. Leslie Dawson.

Attachment 6.3 Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

- Describe quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities
- Describe the timing of the transition to extended services

ATTACHMENT 6.3

QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) remains committed to the provision of quality services to individuals with the most significant disabilities through the provision of supported employment services. ADRS provides supported employment services through a collaborative/partnership effort with 34 service providers statewide. These providers offer services to individuals with a variety of significant disabilities without restrictions regarding disability type. The SE providers are distributed throughout the state in order to ensure maximum availability to those in need of supported employment. Service providers receive funds for the provision of supported employment through an outcome based payment system. Providers must submit evidence that each milestone has been achieved. Some milestones include consumer and employer satisfaction surveys. The consumer satisfaction is designed to reflect satisfaction with the job or any concerns the consumer has. The employer satisfaction survey is designed to reflect the consumer's job performance, stability and training needs. Supported employment funds are distributed to each provider agency based on the number of individuals served and closed successfully in the program.

In FY 2011 the SE program:

- Funded 31 agencies across the state to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- In FY 2011, 746 individuals received supported employment services, including assessments, through the provision of Milestones. In FY 2011, of the 569 consumers with supported employment plans, 286 were closed successfully employed. These individuals averaged more than 21.5 hours per week and earned over \$7.68 per hour. Over 700 individuals continued to be followed in long term support. ADRS continues to seek methods to increase participation of individuals with all types of disabilities in supported employment programs. Initiatives for improving transition services are being implemented as well as working with DMH on improving services to those with serve mental illness.
- Continued to collaborate closely with Alabama APSE-The Network on Employment, Department of Mental Health, Technical Assistance Continuing Education Center (TACE), and the Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities (DD Council), to provide training to staff, transition job coaches, and Milestone's employees.

ADRS continues to expand services within the state to increase opportunities for individual access to supported employment services. Since FY 2011, six new vendors have been added and five existing vendors have expanded their area of coverage to reach individuals from underserved areas. The quality of these services continues to improve with the implementation of the following initiatives:

- Completed statewide training on Best Practices for Supported Employment for ADRS counselors and Service Providers.
- Completed two trainings for job developers and job coaches from Community Rehabilitation Facilities, DMH, and school settings, providing the most current practices and initiatives to enhance skills and knowledge. These training opportunities were provided to ensure a customer-driven focus and consistency of services statewide.
- Completed regional trainings and presented at Statewide Conferences on Supported Employment with the Alabama Department of Mental Health. Presented to ADRS counselors and staff, case managers from the Alabama Dept. of Mental Health, students, parents, and community partners to gain a better understanding of application and eligibility, services each agency offered, the waivers offered through Medicaid, and SS implications, and work incentives.
- Conducted statewide training on Best Practices for Supported Employment for all ADRS counselors, supervisors and facility liaisons. SE program providers assisted and participated in these trainings.
- Collaborated with other state agencies and service providers to customize services to meet the needs of those individuals experiencing the most significant disabilities. This collaboration includes the provision of supported employment services utilizing waiver funds to provide employment supports to consumers who are unable to continue working without continuous on-site support.
- Worked to expand service provision to five areas in the state where there was an unmet need for supported employment. Worked with existing service providers to merge services to enhance service provision to clients with Autism Spectrum Disorders.
- Met with staff from Cincinnati Children's Hospital, Project Search, to bring this transition/work model to Alabama. Two employment sites utilizing two school systems will be piloted in August, 2012. This collaborative effort involves the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Education, and the Developmental Disabilities Counsel. Other school systems have expressed an interest in having this program implemented next year.
- Contracted with Auburn University to conduct a comprehensive assessment of Supported Employment in Alabama in order to develop a strategic plan for expansion and improving the quality of services to consumers with the most significant disabilities.
- Implementing summer work programs to address transition services and work services with students who have not traditionally benefitted from supported employment programs in order to increase their social skills and employability to enhance more positive outcomes.

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services provides a Supported Employment Specialist to monitor supported employment services and provide training and technical assistance. Each supported

employment provider operates under a milestone/outcome based program to ensure quality outcomes and appropriate employment options based on individual choice. Consumers are offered the opportunity to participate in community based assessments to facilitate an informed decision regarding their employment goal. Job development is provided on an individual basis to locate employment based on the consumer's interests, skills, limitations and community living needs. Job coaching is also provided at the work site to ensure that the individual has the necessary training, skills and supports to work. Once the consumer is stable in the workplace, extended services are planned and implemented to protect the long term success of the job. Consumer and employer satisfaction regarding the services provided are measured at the time of employment and again before case closure. Extended services are a continuation of ongoing support services provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities. These extended supports are provided at the completion of stabilization, during the successful rehabilitation milestone and beyond ADRS case closure.

System Information

The following information is captured by the MIS.

Last updated on:08/17/2012

Last updated by: saalharrisiiij

Completed on:08/17/2012

Completed by: saalharrisiiij

Approved on:08/23/2012

Approved by: rsaweste