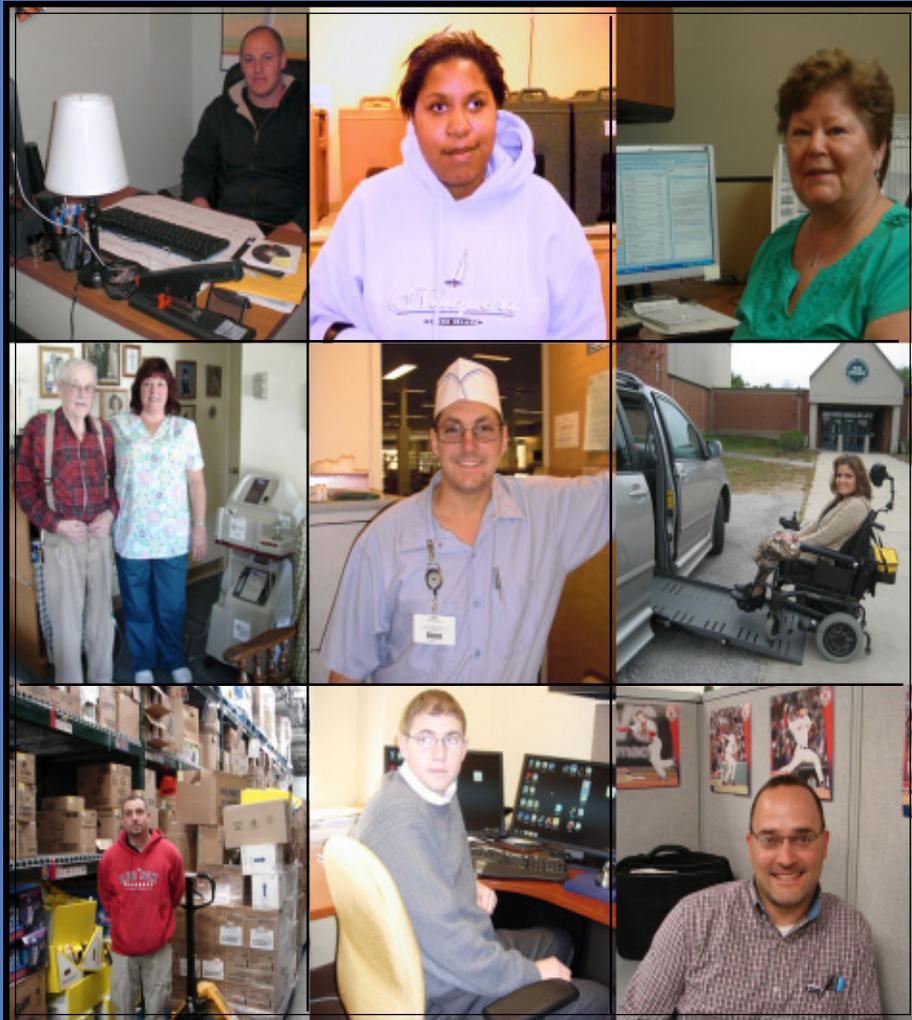


Rhode Island Department of Human Services  
Office of Rehabilitation Services  
and the  
State Rehabilitation Council



# 2010 Annual Report

*Donald L. Carcieri*  
Governor

*Gary D. Alexander*  
Director

## *The Mission of the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services is*

“To empower individuals with disabilities to choose, prepare for, obtain and maintain employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence and integration into society.”



### *Values*

We value the worth, dignity, rights, responsibilities, and empowerment of all persons with disabilities in achieving their individualized goals.

We value staff who reflect pride and commitment to excellence in achieving our mission.

We value a management style that fosters responsibility and accountability while encouraging creativity, initiative, and leadership throughout the organization.

We value community support in achieving the agency's mission.

We value leadership which promotes clarity of purpose.

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# Message from the Director

## Gary D. Alexander



It is my pleasure to provide you with the Annual Report for Federal Fiscal Year 2010 for the Rhode Island Department of

Human Services, Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS). ORS is charged with empowering Rhode Islanders with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence and full integration into society. Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI); and Disability Determination Services (DDS) provide a myriad of resources and services which enhance the quality of life for Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

Younger individuals with disabilities and their families work with vocational rehabilitation counselors in order to make that important transition from school to post-secondary education and careers. The business and labor community depend on ORS for trained, job-ready applicants.

Rhode Islanders applying for social security disability benefits get accurate and timely decisions, and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides services for individuals who have a visual impairment. ORS provides a comprehensive array of personalized services to Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

In FFY 2010 8,068 persons with disabilities were provided vocational rehabilitation, training and employment services. The Disability Determination Services adjudicated 17,970 claims for social security disability benefits.

We are proud of the partnerships that our staff has developed with our citizen advisory councils, our customers and the community, which has contributed so much to the quality of life for individuals with disabilities in Rhode Island.

*Gary D. Alexander*

# Message from the Administrator

## Stephen J. Brunero



On behalf of the Office of Rehabilitation Services, I am pleased to present to you the 2010 Annual Report. The purpose of the Office of Rehabilitation Services is to provide customized and comprehensive services to individuals with disabilities that will maximize their quality of life, self-reliance, and economic independence in the community.

We have included success stories that reflect the diversity of our customers and their needs. We want to illustrate the partnership between our staff and our customers that makes rehabilitation work.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program increases revenue at all levels of government and decreases the burden of income maintenance programs. As persons with disabilities achieve an employment outcome, they become tax-paying citizens and more than pay back the cost of the program.

In 2010, ORS assisted 568 individuals with disabilities to obtain competitive employment. With an emphasis on serving individuals with the most significant disabilities, ORS is making a real difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families. The accomplishments outlined in this annual report reflect favorably on the efforts of the staff who, by hard work and commitment, have continued a long tradition of serving Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

We are also indebted to the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council, Statewide Independent Living Council, Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind & Visually Impaired, State Committee of Blind Vendors, and Rhode Island Council on Assistive Technology for their partnership and help in maximizing the potential of persons with disabilities. I also extend my appreciation to our hard-working and capable staff along with our many public and private partners.

*Stephen J. Brunero*

# Message from the State Rehabilitation Council Chair Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett

The Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council is proud to share the 2010 Annual Report. This report highlights the State Rehabilitation Council's activities during 2010.

The goal of the State Rehabilitation Council continues to be focused on working closely with the Office of Rehabilitation Services to ensure Rhode Islanders with disabilities are able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfying employment. Although faced with significant economic challenges impacting employment opportunities for all Rhode Islanders, the State Rehabilitation Council is proud of the commitment the Office of Rehabilitation Services has demonstrated in maintaining consistent and quality services to Rhode Islanders with disabilities, through these difficult economic times. This commitment is demonstrated by the agency assisting 568 Rhode Islanders with disabilities to secure employment in 2010.

In the past year, the Council continued to organize its work around the

priorities established in the State Plan and through the Council's committee structure. Appointed by the Governor,



each Council member brings unique experiences in advocating for the rights of people with disabilities and the programs and services that assist individuals to become employed. The work of the Council is reflected in the committee reports, which highlight the ongoing partnership between the State Rehabilitation Council and the Office of Rehabilitation Services as they develop and implement quality programs and policies to serve Rhode Islanders with disabilities seeking employment.

As evident in the committee reports, the State Rehabilitation Council has provided the Office of Rehabilitation Services with guidance and support on innovative programming, methods for obtaining customer satisfaction, and proactive strategies for the removal of barriers

to productive employment. The committee reports review the Council's activities including the benefits of an effective leadership development program; methods to increasing employer partnerships and enhancing communications; strategies to eliminate transportation barriers; the role in providing feedback and testimony on the State Plan; and the utilization of effective quality assurance measures.

As in prior years, the Comprehensive Needs Assessment will continue to be an important factor in determining the direction of the establishment of the State Rehabilitation Council goals and priorities for the upcoming year. In addition, the Executive Committee of the Council meets with the Office Rehabilitation Services leadership team on a regular basis to provide assistance and guidance in meeting the goals and mission of the agency. Also, the Executive Committee and full Council continue supporting the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, I would like to thank the

Council Members for their outstanding work and the Administrator of the Office of Rehabilitation Services, Mr. Stephen Brunero for his commitment to the Council and our shared vision.

The State Rehabilitation Council hopes this annual report demonstrates the critical value of vocational rehabilitation, through an overview of the initiatives and accomplishments of the Council and the Office of Rehabilitation Services. The State Rehabilitation Council shares an open invitation to join us for a Council meeting.

The meetings are open to the public and information on the Council is available on the Office of Rehabilitation Services website - [www.ors.ri.gov/SRC.html](http://www.ors.ri.gov/SRC.html).

*Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett*

# State Rehabilitation Council Members

Corey Allard

Janice Belasco

Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett, **Chair**

Stephen Brunero, **ORS Administrator**

Rocco Bruno

T. Wheeler Clemons (ORS Liaison)

Kelly Conti

Cynthia Cote

Domenic DiOrio

Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor

Dr. Judith L. Drew

Joan Fino

Dorothy Furlong

Jeanne Giroux

Paul Harden

Michael Hazard

Margaret Hoye

Roger Andrew Iannetta

Anne LeClerc

Anna Liebenow

Sanford Lupovitz

Jeffrey Machado

Lucille Massemino

Daniel Pieroni

Vincent Rossi

Catherine Sansonetti, **Secretary**

Jane Slade

Juan Troncoso

Joan Vendetti

Mary Wambach

Herb Weiss

# State Rehabilitation Council Committees

## Employment

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

The committee works closely with the Office of Rehabilitation Services staff to support their efforts in ensuring individuals with disabilities obtain employment opportunities.

The Employment Committee continued to work toward the following goals for activity in three areas during the previous program year:

- Inter-agency coordination and cooperation by statewide agencies and committees that concentrate on generating and developing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The Committee completed an assessment of other committees throughout the State focused on employment of people with disabilities to identify gaps and recommend strategies for the committees to develop common goals.

- Communication with federal and state government agencies responsible for

overseeing compliance by employers with regulations relative to the hiring of applicants and policies for active employees. The focus of the Committee continues to be on increasing education aimed at reducing the incidence of violations so that more employers would consider employing people with disabilities.

- Continue to support the Business Advisory Council and assist with outreach to identify additional businesses to increase employer knowledge of the work of the State Rehabilitation Council. The Committee is focused on identifying additional businesses with the ultimate goals of increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Sanford Lupovitz and Jane Slade,  
Co-Chairs*

# Nominating and Leadership Development

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

In an on-going effort, the Nominating and Leadership Committee is mindful of the mission of the State Rehabilitation Councils' goals and objectives to recruit qualified individuals to be members on the State Rehabilitation Council. In the recruitment process, this Committee is ever diligent in their search for members who represent the rich diversity of the state-wide community, as mandated by the Federal Legislation, and who will provide leadership and significance on the Council. Guided by Federal Guidelines and the Council's By-Laws, the composition of the SRC includes representation from minorities, business and disabled population. The Nominating and Leadership Committee efforts has again met with success in presenting four outstanding new members to be part of the State Rehabilitation Council.

Working with the State Rehabilitation Council and the Office of Rehabilitation Services, the Nominating and Leadership Committee presented guest speakers from both the public and private sector and from the staff of ORS. The purpose of the Leadership Component of the Committee is to provide to the membership valuable information that will enhance the knowledge

base of the membership in carrying out its duties and obligations in support of the Mission of the Office of Rehabilitation Services.

This past year the Committee identified another goal. The Nominating and Leadership Committee, in collaboration with the Marketing Committee of the Office of Rehabilitation Services, began strong concerted efforts to develop a Public Awareness Program utilizing public media such as newspapers, TV and radio.

The Nominating and Leadership Committee is composed of many dedicated professionals who work as a collective unit in support of the Federal Mandates and in support of the other Committees on the Council. The Nominating and Leadership Committee will continue its commitment to recruit new members, who will not only enhance the quality of the SRC Leadership, but also continue the strong partnership between the Office of Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Lucille Massimino and  
Domenic Di Orio, Co-Chairs*

# State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance

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

The State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee continues to serve as a guide for the Office of Rehabilitation Services. As in prior years, the SRC provides annual feedback and public testimony regarding the draft State Plan. The State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee reviews feedback from the SRC members and provides an overview of positive outcomes and suggested areas for improvement. In 2010, the Committee expressed concern that ORS continues to be burdened by State budget cuts and that additional resources are required. In addition, the Committee provided favorable feedback to the effectiveness of the Customer Satisfaction Surveys, targeting status 26 and 28 closures. The survey, which is sent to consumers on a quarterly basis, continues to successfully track customer satisfaction trends and provides data on quality assurance and policy recommendations.

In 2010, as in other years, the State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee consulted with the Council in the Strategic Planning Initiative to identify

action steps and timelines for accomplishment of committee-specific tasks. The Committee reviewed its prior goals and identified strategies to address service delivery challenges as a result of the changes in the State budget.

In addition, the Committee conducted ongoing reviews and made recommendations of four ORS policies and procedures changes to ensure compliance with federal law.

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

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

# Transportation

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

The Transportation Committee reviewed its mission over this past year and determined that it could be more effective by reaching out to other organizations who share similar missions of increasing access to transportation for all Rhode Islanders. The Committee met four times during the year to refine its goals and to determine its plan for the next steps in advocacy and education.

As a result of these meetings, two activities were targeted for this past year. First, the Committee supported the study of non-profit transportation funding and eligibility criteria conducted by RIPTA. Individual committee members recruited their organizations to participate in the study and encouraged other organizations to participate. The Committee supported the RIPTA study because it felt it would determine what is actually being spent for funding for transportation for individuals with disabilities, the elderly, and the disadvantaged, and it would identify where there may be inefficiencies and barriers to improving the coordination, quality and effectiveness of these services. The RIPTA study was completed and the results will be

made public in the near future. The survey did reveal that there is considerable room for improvement in the efficiency, oversight, and coordination of services.

The other major initiative involved joining a coalition of like-minded organizations that share the common goal of improving transportation choices and increasing transportation access for all Rhode Islanders. After much research and deliberation by the Committee, it was agreed that the Transportation Committee would associate with the Coalition for Transportation Choices to engage in legislative advocacy and to raise the awareness of the need for increased access to public transportation. The Committee also agreed that it would work closely with the Governor's Commission on Disabilities to determine what legislative initiatives may be necessary to achieve this goal.

For the coming year, the Committee has two goals. The first is to use the results of the RIPTA study to advocate for a better system of transportation for individuals with disabilities that is both cost-effective and

that provides greater access for more individuals. The second is to work closely with the Coalition for Transportation Choices and the Governor's Commission on Disabilities to support a more

economical and efficient system of funding and oversight for transportation alternatives that reduces silos and to advocate for and/or support legislation that achieves these goals.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Anne LeClerc and Dr. Judy Drew, Co-Chairs*

## 2010 SRC Annual Meeting May 11, 2010



*Members L-R Front Row: Michael Hazard, Margaret Hoye, Mary Wambach, Elizabeth Graves, Dottie Furlong, Elisabeth Hubbard, Joan Vendetti, Roberta Whittemore, Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor, Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett*

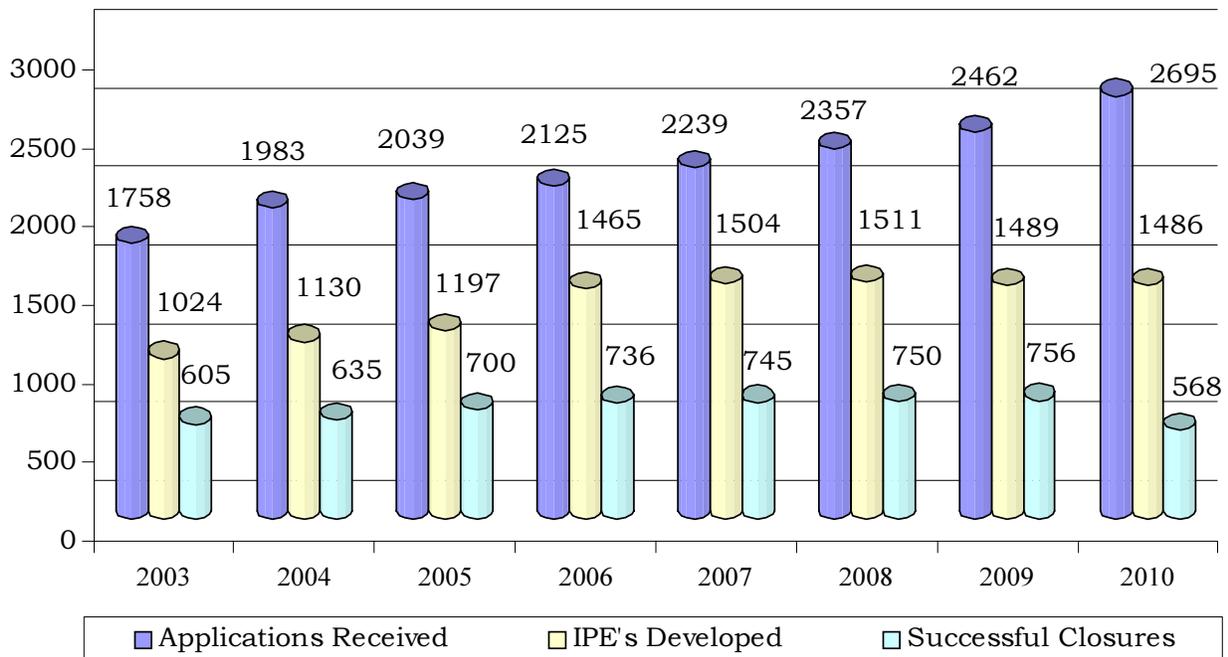
*Rear Row: Stephen Brunero (ORS), Kathleen Grygiel (ORS), Janice Belasco, Laurie DiOrio (ORS), Roger Iannetta, Jane Slade, Dr. Judy Drew, Linda Deschenes (ORS), Anne LeClerc, Jeff Machado, Juan Troncosco, Ron Racine (ORS), Paul Harden, Rocco Bruno, Nancy Baker, Vin Rossi, Sanford Lupovitz, Herb Weiss, Domenic DiOrio, Wheeler Clemons (ORS)*

# Program Highlights – Federal Fiscal Year 2010 October 1, 2009 – September 30, 2010

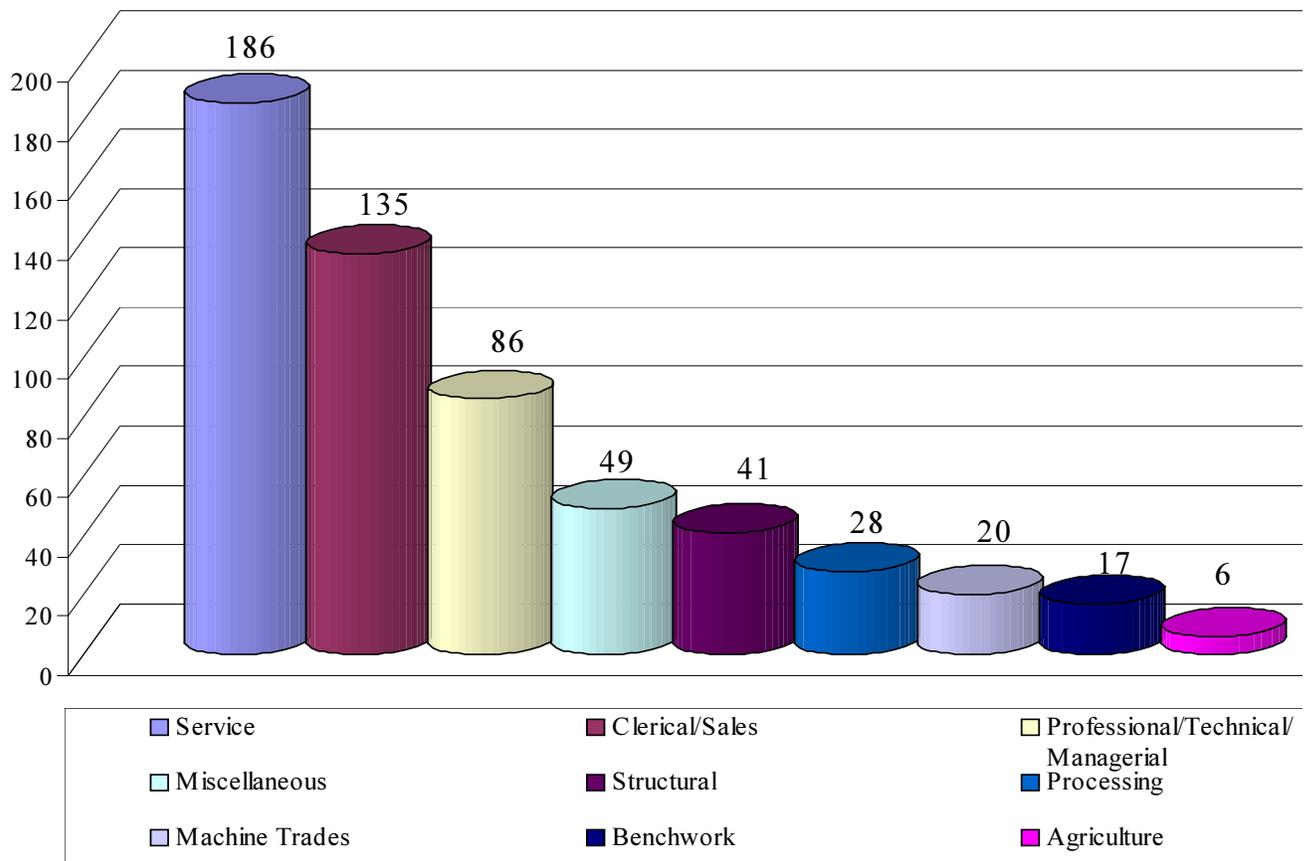
## 568 individuals were successfully employed

- 2,695 individuals applied for vocational rehabilitation services.
- 8,068 individuals with disabilities were provided vocational rehabilitation services.
- 1,486 individuals worked with a vocational rehabilitation counselor to develop a new Individualized Plan for Employment [IPE].
- 4,911 individuals received Counseling and Guidance Services from vocational rehabilitation counselors.
- 3,157 individuals received services purchased from vendors. Services ranged from evaluations, medical and psychological therapies, training, personal assistant services, job placement and training.

### 2003-2010 Statistical Comparison



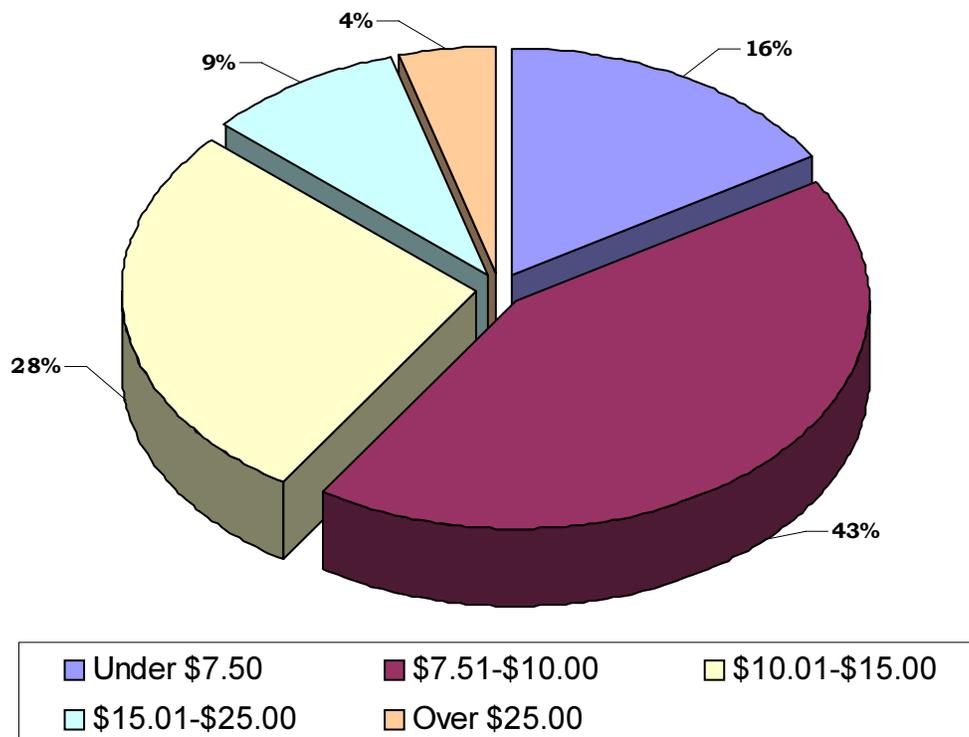
## Primary Occupation of 568 Persons Successfully Employed



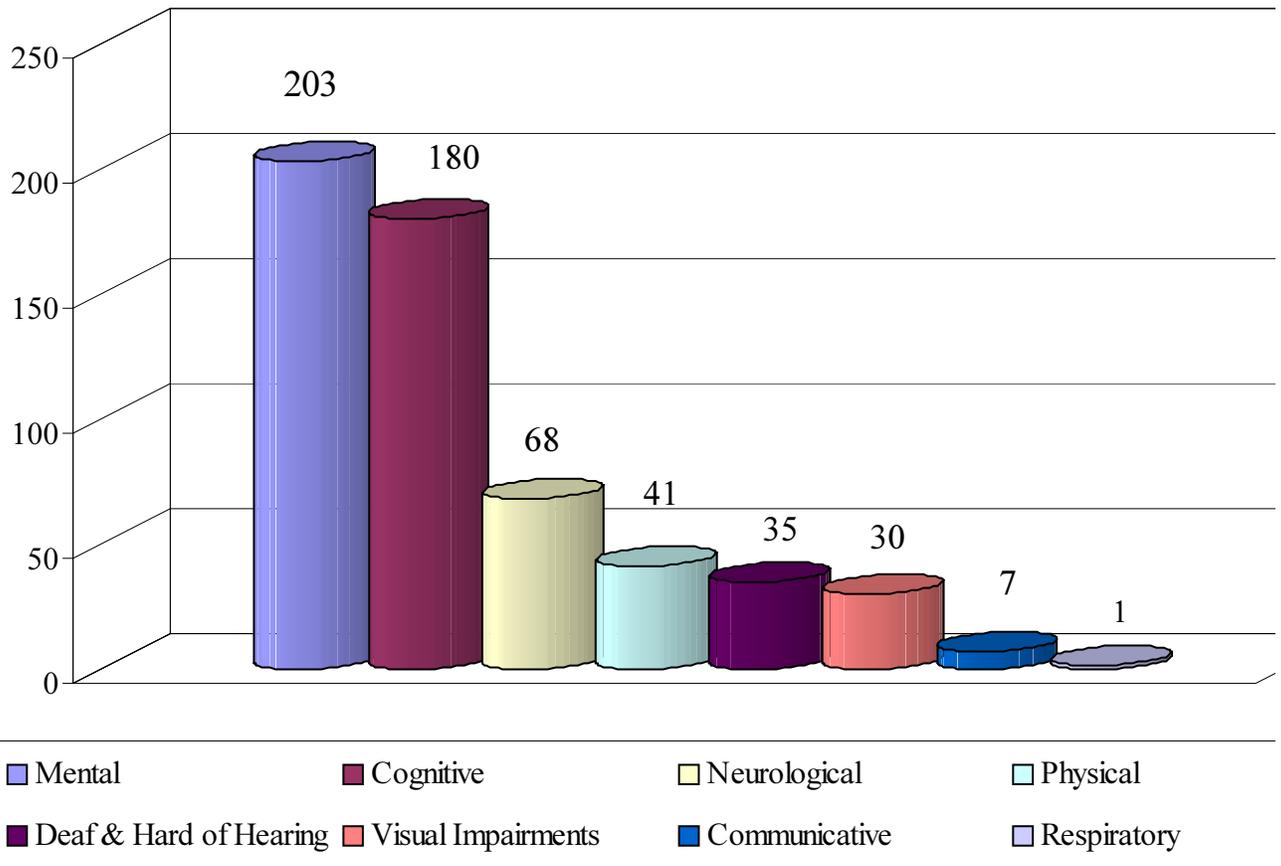
- 365 individuals received rehabilitation technology services to assist them to prepare for and to enter employment.
- 2,114 individuals received information from Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) Resource Centers about assistive technology and funding options.
- 2,792 individuals received AT training, demonstration, loans or assistance with recycled AT devices.
- 394 individuals were provided specialized equipment through the ATEL (Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan) Program.
- 1,336 youth with disabilities ages 14-21 have been provided transition services by 18 VR counselors.
- 17 vending facilities were supported by the Business Enterprises Program (BEP) at Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. BEP sales totaled approximately \$1.5 million. BEP also trained and licensed one new vendor.
- 540 individuals were registered for NEWSLINE, a newspaper reading service.

- 72 children age birth through three years old were provided early intervention services including case management, functional vision evaluations, orientation and mobility, adaptive equipment, preschool Braille & toys. 24 toddlers transitioned at the age of three into public school programs.
  
- 243 children ages three to fourteen, were provided services including case management, functional vision evaluations, provision of low vision aids and closed circuit reading systems, computer adaptations, and a summer and winter educational camp experience.
  
- 24,500 children were screened by the Vision Screening Program resulting in 945 children receiving necessary follow-up care thus reducing or eliminating the early impact of poor visual function.
  
- 829 elderly individuals who are blind or visually impaired received services from the Independent Living for Older Blind Program. 555 case plans completed. 97.4% of this group reported that they feel more confident in their independent living, and 35.9% or 199 indicated they had considered nursing home placement prior to services, but were able to remain in their own homes.
  
- 42 children who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled attended the summer session at Camp Mauchatea.

**Hourly Wage of 568 Successfully Employed  
Individuals with Disabilities**



## Primary Disability of 568 Persons Successfully Employed



### Disability Determination Services

17,629 total cases were received by the Disability Determination Services

17,970 claims were successfully processed by the Disability Determination Services

11,644 initial claims were received

1,265 continuing disabilities review cases, including 153 face-to-face hearings (appeals)

7,588 Consultative Examinations were purchased

14,686 Medical Evidence of Record purchased

\$2,305,240 Total Medical Costs with a Total Budget of \$8,367,730

\$464.36 Cost per case

Production Per Work Year (PPWY) efficiency rate was 391.8. The national rate was 272.5. The performance accuracy rate for RI was 95.7%. The net accuracy was 97.3%.

The regulatory standard is 90.6%.

# Vocational Rehabilitation

The Vocational Rehabilitation process consists of assisting an individual with a disability to assess his/her vocational abilities and to identify, coordinate and provide services needed to realize employment. The partnership between each individual with a disability and their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is a key component in the Vocational Rehabilitation process. The individual and his/her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor work together to develop an Employment Plan which will assist that individual to reach his/her employment goal. Vocational Rehabilitation services that may be incorporated in an Employment Plan may include:

- ◆ Counseling and Guidance to help plan vocational goals and services
  - ◆ Transition Services from School to Career
  - ◆ Rehabilitation Technology Services
  - ◆ Assistive Technology Services
  - ◆ Diagnostic Evaluations
  - ◆ College or Vocational Training
- ◆ Job Development and Placement Services
  - ◆ Vehicle Modifications
  - ◆ Housing Modifications
  - ◆ Post-Employment Services
  - ◆ Other Goods and Services
  - ◆ Job Training and Job Supports

## Deaf Services...

The Office of Rehabilitation Services helps individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing obtain services to meet their needs, provides counseling and guidance to help plan vocational goals and services, and assists the individual to obtain employment. They serve as a resource to professionals, state agencies, community organizations, and the public providing information related to employment, training and accommodations for persons who have a hearing loss.

## **Independent Living Services...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services purchases assessments and independent living services from the two Independent Living Centers, PARI and OSCIL, as part of preparing individuals with significant disabilities for employment.

## **The Rhode Island Learning Disabilities Project ...**

The LD Project is a unique Department of Human Services intra-agency initiative between the Office of Rehabilitation Services and the RI Works (formerly FIP) program. This collaborative relationship was created to help identify parents on cash assistance with learning disabilities, and to provide the necessary accommodations and vocational training programs in order for those individuals to become independent and economically self-sufficient. During 2010, the nationally-recognized LD Project served **48** individuals and assisted **25** individuals with learning disabilities to reach their employment goals.

## **Supported Employment...**

Supported employment assists individuals with the most significant disabilities who need ongoing supports to choose, find and keep competitive employment in community-integrated settings. After initial services by ORS, long-term funding is provided through other funding sources.

## **Transition...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services has a strong commitment to assist students with disabilities with transition planning to adult life. ORS counselors assist all school districts and students with disabilities and their families to plan services to help students reach career goals. ORS counselors provide technical assistance and information to school systems and work in partnership with school transition staff, 5 Regional Educational Collaboratives, and 4 Transition Academies to improve transition planning.

# Other Programs

## **Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan (ATEL) Program...**

The ATEL Program loans telephone equipment to residents of the State of Rhode Island who have hearing, speech, or neuromuscular (unable to dial or hold a receiver) impairments and have a signed certificate of disability. Equipment is issued on a first-come, first-serve basis.

## **Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP)...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services is the lead agency for the Rhode Island Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP). ATAP is a statewide program funded under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, which works to reduce or eliminate barriers that impede access to, and funding for, assistive technology devices and services for individuals with disabilities of all ages.

## **Home Modification Program...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services administers federal and state independent living funds which provide home accessibility and adaptive equipment for individuals who are significantly disabled, to enable them to meet independent living goals in their homes and communities.

## **State PCA Program...**

The Office of Rehabilitation Services contracts with PARI Independent Living Center to be the fiscal agent for the State Personal Care Assistance program for individuals who are not eligible for Medicaid-funded waivers. Through this program individuals are able to continue living in the community rather than in a nursing home.

## **Work Incentive Planning & Assistance (WIPA)...**

WIPA is a cooperative agreement with the Social Security Administration and the Office of Rehabilitation Services. The goal of the project is to assist SSA beneficiaries with disabilities to succeed in their efforts to obtain or return to work. The project emphasizes return to work efforts by providing accurate information regarding work incentives planning, assistance and outreach services that are designed to encourage beneficiaries with disabilities to seek, maintain and regain employment.

# Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI)

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) offers a wide array of services to eligible individuals who are blind or visually impaired through its Vocational Rehabilitation Unit, Business Enterprises Program, and Social Services Program. The various services offered by these programs are designed to help individuals of all ages achieve independence at home, in the community, and in the workplace.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Program...** is a Federal/State Program created to assist people who are blind or visually impaired to obtain or maintain employment. Services provided include evaluation, orientation, mobility training, rehabilitation technology, guidance and counseling, career assessment, educational planning, vocational training, provision of adaptive equipment, job development, placement, and follow-up services.

**Business Enterprises Program...** is a Federal/State Program which establishes vending facilities in state, federal or private buildings for operation by persons who are legally blind. Licensed blind vendors operate vending facilities at 17 locations throughout the state and are assigned to these locations on the basis of their seniority within the program. Types of facilities range from small snack bars serving light snacks and beverages to larger food-service sites serving hot and cold entrees prepared on-site. All operate under the name of "Coffee Plus". On October 21, 2010 a new Coffee Plus stand opened at the RI Registry of Motor Vehicles in Cranston.



**Newsline...** is a comprehensive newspaper reading service available to individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or print handicapped, that is accessible through the use of any touch-tone telephone. Individuals can access more than 200 newspapers and magazines, including The Providence Journal, The New York Times, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and the AARP Monthly Newsletter.

## Social Services Program...

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired coordinates a federal comprehensive service program which focuses primarily on children from birth through age 14, elderly individuals, and individuals for whom a vocational goal is not feasible.

- ◆ **Children's Case Management Services** include family casework, coordination with Early Intervention Programs, educational guidance, summer camp for youth, arrangement of ophthalmological and low vision evaluations, and information and referral to appropriate community programs.
- ◆ **Vision Screening Program** provided through *Saving Sight RI* utilizes an MTI photoscreening device to take pictures of the child's eye without the child having to read an eye chart. Screenings are done in day care centers, nursery schools, public schools and other community locations.
- ◆ **Independent Living for Older Blind Program** provides case management services, along with ancillary services for mobility and orientation, rehabilitation teaching for skills training in activities of daily living, management of low vision, provisions of adaptive equipment, and information and referral to support groups and appropriate community services.



Camp Mauchatea - 2010

## Disability Determination Services (DDS)

Disability Determination Services (DDS) is the unit within the Office of Rehabilitation Services which determines the medical eligibility of Rhode Island residents (both children and adults) who have applied for benefits under the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) programs. The DDS, although fully-federally funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA), is a state agency responsible for obtaining the medical records and other information needed to determine whether the applicant meets the criteria for disability as defined by the SSA rules and regulations.

Over the past 6 years, the Rhode Island DDS, as a part of the national Social Security initiative, has transformed from a paper-based institution to a fully electronic record-keeping system. With the inclusion of Continuing Disability Reviews (CDR's) to the electronic process in early FY 2009, the DDS gained the capacity to process better than 98% of its current workload electronically. Using scanning contractors, local scanning, and inbound and outbound faxing, the images of all medical records are stored in an electronic case folder. This allows multiple individuals to be working with the case record at the same time and for exchange of case information with experts

throughout the national Social Security system.

In 2006 and 2007, the Rhode Island DDS was one of 6 states nationally to pilot a newly-structured case adjudication system. This new model known as DSI (Disability Service Improvement) utilized the innovations available in the electronic processes to identify and streamline the adjudication and review of cases with a high likelihood of being allowed. As a pilot state, Rhode Island tested multiple manifestations of the model and gave critical input in determining which elements of DSI would move forward. The DSI paradigm did not survive in its original model, but the finest aspects of the design were saved and incorporated nationally to improve the overall product utilized by disability examiners in all states.

The Rhode Island DDS continues to play an important role in determining the design of the adjudicative model for the Social Security Disability Program. This is accomplished by testing, evaluating, and incorporating the innovations which make the system more friendly and navigable for the disability applicant. The RIDDS is involved currently with the development of a new Disability Case Processing System which will begin Beta Testing in 2011. This legacy data tool will standardize the

information technology and maintenance of all the DDS's nationwide, and eventually tie in with all other operatives within the Social Security Administration disability adjudication program.

In FY 2010 the RI DDS processed almost 18,000 disability applications for residents of Rhode Island and achieved measures of accuracy and productivity which ranked in the top 10% in the nation. The number of individuals seeking disability determinations has increased dramatically over the past two years both in Rhode Island and nationwide, partly as a function of the widespread economic downturn. In federal FY 2009 Rhode Island DDS's case receipts increased by over 35%, which was the third highest percentage increase in the country. In FY 2010, the RIDDS saw a 6% increase on top of the prior years numbers. The RIDDS, with a diminished staff, has struggled to keep pace with its workload. The by-product unfortunately has been a progressively longer wait for disabled Rhode Islanders to receive information as to the outcome of their disability application. The case processing time in Rhode Island is the longest in the country, approaching double the national average. The continued increase in case receipts coupled with the ongoing lack of necessary staff does not bode well for any significant improvement in the promptness

of adjudication services offered to the citizens of Rhode Island.

## Local Social Security Offices

380 Westminster Mall, Room 318  
Providence, RI 02903  
1-877-402-0808

30 Quaker Lane, 1st Floor  
Warwick, RI 02886-0111  
1-866-964-2038

4 Pleasant Street  
Pawtucket, RI 02860  
1-866-931-7079

Pavilion Plaza  
2168 Diamond Hill Road  
Woonsocket, RI 02895  
1-877-229-3542

130 Bellevue Avenue  
Newport, RI 02840  
1-866-253-5607

2 Shaws Cove, Room 203  
New London, CT 06320  
1-866-643-3401

# Recognizing Success

*“As reported, ORS assisted 568 individuals to obtain employment in jobs that were consistent with their goals and aspirations. Of that number, ORS would like to showcase some individuals who exemplify the benefits of employment.”*

**Client:** Matt Berard  
**Occupation:** Job Developer  
**Employer:** State of RI  
**Counselor:** Karen LeBeau



Matthew is a 43-year old married man with six children. He was referred to ORS due to a back injury.

Matthew’s Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Karen LeBeau, suggested he attend an Interviewing Skills Workshop that was being held by ORS. Matthew attended this 3-day workshop and then was referred to an ORS Job Developer. Matthew worked in collaboration with the ORS Workforce Development Supervisor, the job developer, and his ORS counselor researching several job leads.

Matthew applied for a Job Developer position and was hired in December,

2009. Due to his back injuries, the employer purchased a chair with built-in lumbar support and a laptop so he could more efficiently perform his job duties while meeting with customers. He uses the laptop to assist with online job searches and applications where internet access is not always readily available.

Matthew has been so effective as a job developer, that he has assisted 25 individuals with disabilities to become employed.

**Client:** Mary Ann Barbary  
**Occupation:** Customer Service Manager  
**Employer:** RIPTA  
**Counselor:** Paula Berard



Mary Ann, a Customer Service Manager with RIPTA, supervises staff and fields complaints and concerns from the public. She does this via the telephone, as well as in person. Her work space had the typical background noises found in any office environment - conversation, office machinery, telephones, and the hum of buses. Her ability to hear was critical to Mary Ann's ability to perform her job.

When the RIPTA headquarters moved, her office space changed, as did the activity level in her area, which increased dramatically. Whereas she had previously been able to close a door to keep out distracting noise, Mary Ann's staff members now sat within her immediate work area. With her hearing impairment, she had difficulty hearing her customers, both face-to-face and on the phone; conversing with her immediate staff members, with whom she had direct supervision; and was exposed to uncomfortable noise levels, (i.e. voices of vendors and visitors checking in at the windows of the new Customer Service Office). Mary Ann was concerned about

her performance, as she takes great pleasure in doing her job and is meticulous about her work. Her difficulties with hearing were affecting her ability to carry out job tasks with the ease she once had been able to do so. Everything became a chore or a challenge and her quality of life on and off the job were compromised. Mary Ann became exhausted with the effort! Over time, she began to feel isolated and frustrated. Her difficulty in hearing progressively increased causing her anxiety, as well as professional and personal embarrassment. Since the same challenges carried over to her personal life, she felt opportunity was passing her by.

It was while investigating services for a co-worker with visual problems that Mary Ann found out about ORS and became curious about vocational rehabilitation services. She wondered if, perhaps, she could be helped too. After meeting with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor who works specifically with individuals who are

Deaf or Hard of Hearing, she was referred to an Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist (ENT) and an audiologist. They performed hearing evaluations and then recommended a hearing aid. Although unnecessary for Mary Ann, an additional service the ORS often provides to clients is a workplace assessment, which is done in order to identify needed work site job accommodations. The VR counselor followed along with Mary Ann throughout the process, monitoring her progress.

Mary Ann reports she hears much better now and is able to perform her job without the anxiety she used to feel. She reports the true test for her hearing aid came when she attended a group event. Instead of hearing the distant hum of

conversation, she could now distinguish individual voices and dialogue. She no longer has problems with uncomfortable pitch and levels of noise in her place of employment, as her digital hearing aid allows her to adjust the settings. Her world has opened up! She has become a big advocate for the ORS and recommends services to anyone who needs them.

Through assessments, vocational guidance, counseling, and referral services, the ORS was able to assist Mary Ann maintain her job by providing assistive technology in the form of a hearing aid. The Office of Rehabilitation Services made it possible for this client to keep her employment, maintain her independence, and to enjoy a better quality of life.

“I can’t believe I didn’t do this sooner;  
it would have saved years of struggling.”  
*MaryAnn Barbary*

**Client:** Mireya Moronta  
**Occupation:** Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)  
**Counselor:** DonnaLee Sweet

At the time of her application, Mireya was a 55-year old female with limited English language skills. She was referred to this Agency by a co-worker at Victoria Court, where she worked as a Personal Care Assistant (PCA) since 2002. She was seeking assistance with being recertified as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). Her prior CNA license had expired in 1994.

Mireya was recovering from surgery; and she was also being treated for diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, vertigo and chronic pain.

ORS authorized training with Comprehensive Educational Services (CES). CES provided tutoring for her to re-take the certification test, which she was able to pass on the second try. Other services provided by ORS included vocational guidance and counseling, information and referral services, payment for her to be retested at CCRI and authorization for uniforms from Amegamall.

Mireya was able to advance in her profession, which is a good job match for her and reflected her IPE. She has been successfully working as a CNA since April, 2010, and her pay rate is commensurate with others in the industry.

**Client:** Antanika Cole  
**Occupation:** Food Server  
**Employer:** Newport Navy Base  
**Counselor:** Danielle Williams



Antanika Cole is a 24-year old woman who was referred to ORS in 2004 by her high School. Antanika developed her employment plan, that had the goal of working in the food service industry, in collaboration with her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at ORS.

Through the the Office of Rehabilitation Services, Looking Upwards and the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Antanika became successfully employed at the Newport Navy Base in the galley where she serves meals to the men and women who serve in the Navy. Because Antanika has shown that she is such a hard worker, she has been given additional job duties and is seen as a role model for her co-workers.

Antanika is a determined and hard-working young woman, who has overcome many challenges in her life. She is proof that a strong work ethic, positive attitude, and hard work are traits valued by employers.

**Client:** MaryBeth Caldarone  
**Occupation:** Speech and Language Pathologist  
**Employer:** Chariho Middle School  
**Counselor:** Cora Banerjee



Marybeth Caldarone is a remarkable person. As a child she had trouble walking and using her hands and eventually required a wheelchair and assistance with daily living skills. At the time she was diagnosed with Idiopathic Peripheral Neuropathy, but the cause was not determined until her daughter began to show the same symptoms at age two and genetic studies were done. Both are now diagnosed with Charcot Marie Tooth Disease (CMT), a genetic neuromuscular disorder which affects both sensory and motor nerves in varying degrees of severity.

Despite these limitations Marybeth went on to graduate school and became a Speech and Language Pathologist. She is now married with two children and is employed full time at Chariho Middle School. Her husband provides assistance at home, and she has a one-on-one aide at school. Her disease is progressive however, and every year presents new challenges. She contacted ORS to reopen her case in August 2009 because she needed to

purchase a new modified van in order to get to and from work and maintain employment. Previously she was able to drive, but now her husband drives, and she rides as a passenger. ORS was able to meet part of the cost of this very expensive modification when she purchased her new van.

Since Marybeth had not recently received services from ORS (the family had been purchasing what they thought was needed), a Home Accessibility Evaluation was offered to guide them in future purchases. Marybeth also requested training in using Dragon Naturally Speaking. She had purchased the software on her own but was unable to use it. Through BioNEXUS, an ORS vendor, her technology needs were evaluated; and she was provided with training to use the software. She was an excellent student and is now able to access the voice-activated software independently both at work and home.

**Client:** Wesley Garvin  
**Occupation:** Executive Director  
**Counselor:** Dorian Havers



Wesley Garvin is a 49-year-old man who applied for services in August 2008. He was qualified for vocational services on the basis of severe Learning Disabilities (dyslexia) and Diabetes Mellitus. As a result of his severe learning disabilities, he had not completed high school. After an LD assessment, he completed his plan in October of 2008 with the employment goal of Hospitality, as he had previously worked for the Marriott. Now that he had the proper supports in place, he wanted to first and foremost complete his GED.

Anybody who has had the privilege of working with Mr. Garvin notices his sharp wit and warm personality. He carries himself well and is extremely well spoken. Despite his prior frustrations with education, he is a quick study and possesses very strong communication skills.

Mr. Garvin spent quite a bit of his time studying and increasing his skills to achieve his initial GED goal. However, Mr. Garvin is quick to point out that opportunity sometimes presents itself in very unique ways. While working on his GED, he started networking with various members at RI Department of Education (RIDE), and

they determined that there was a need for an advocate such as Mr. Garvin. The thought of student leadership in RI was first conceived in 2007. Mr. Garvin founded the organization *Students Taking Action Now with Determination* (STAND) in September of 2009 as an advocate organization for adult learners just like himself. The organization receives funding from RIDE, and Mr. Garvin serves as the Executive Director.

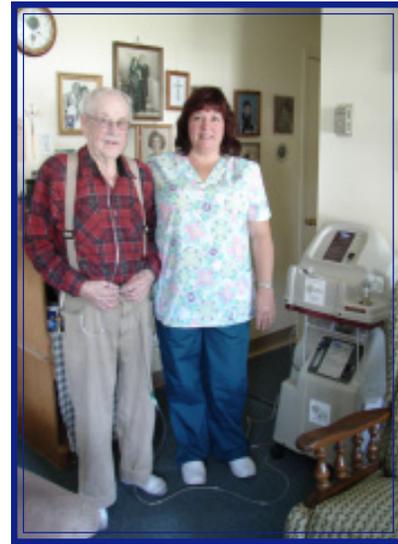
Mr. Garvin requested assistance from ORS in making his job fully accessible for him. He has received a new laptop which will be equipped with voice recognition software to allow him to read and write emails, draft letters, and complete all other job related tasks successfully despite his dyslexia. He also received a talking dictionary.

While maintaining his Executive Director position, Mr. Garvin continued his initial goal and recently completed the final test to obtain his GED. He still holds more goals to continue his education now that he has the resources and tools to accomplish this task, and he continues to be successfully employed.

**Client:** Shirley Comeau  
**Occupation:** Home Health Aide  
**Counselor:** Teresa O'Brien

Shirley reapplied for services from the Office of Rehabilitation Services in September 2009. She had been working as a cashier/stock clerk at Ocean State Job Lot when she was laid off and needed assistance with obtaining a job. Over the years, Shirley had struggled with employment activities that would allow her to independently obtain a job. Shirley and Teresa O'Brien, her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, spent a considerable amount of time examining her interests and abilities, as well as relating them to the current labor market, so she could make a decision about the type of work that might be a good match.

While speaking to Shirley, it was revealed that she took great pride in taking care of her elderly parents for six years. Shirley really enjoyed helping her parents with daily living activities, as well as providing companionship. It was revealed Shirley's occupational choice of caregiver matched perfectly with her interests and aptitudes.



*Howard and Shirley*

Being extremely anxious about the prospect of a job search, Shirley worked with her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to apply for jobs and prepare for interviews. For her first interview, Shirley's Rehabilitation Counselor went on the job interview with her to decrease the anxiety people often feel when searching for a job. As Shirley began to receive more interviews, her Rehabilitation Counselor referred Shirley to an in-house job developer to help her fill out applications, go on interviews, help her with time management, gain BCI checks, and maintain her resume.

After a diligent job search, Shirley obtained full-time employment working as a caregiver for the elderly.

**Client:** Mark Gaccione  
**Occupation:** Retail  
**Employer:** Wal-Mart  
**Counselor:** Teresa O'Brien

Mark initially applied for services in 2006 when he came to ORS looking for help in maintaining employment. He stated that he had memory problems which made it difficult for him to stay competitively employed. Services provided by the Office of Rehabilitation Services to address these impediments to employment included guidance and counseling, assessment, career exploration, ongoing medical follow up and medical management, job development/job placement services, and job retention services.

Mark chose work in the retail industry as a vocational goal. Currently, Mark is employed at Wal-Mart working in the dairy section. Mark became successfully employed in March, 2007. Since then, Mark has come back to ORS to seek post-employment services. Post-employment services included



guidance and counseling, information and referral services, assessment, and medication intervention.

As a result of these post-employment services, Mark continues to be successfully employed and is currently getting ready to train for a Department Manager position.

“I am doing the best I’ve ever done in my life in the work field.”  
*Mark Gaccione*

**Client:** Daniel Kendig  
**Occupation:** Financial Analyst  
**Employer:** Providence Financial Firm  
**Counselor:** Graciela Pires



Daniel is a 24 year old man who is employed as an analyst at a financial firm in Providence. His job is to build financial models for companies. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Finance from Roger Williams University, Bristol, RI in 2008. Daniel has had visual barriers since childhood.

Daniel contacted the Office of Rehabilitation Services/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired in late 2009 and requested assistance with maintaining his current employment. He explained that his vision had deteriorated to the point that he was having difficulty performing all the essential tasks of the job. He also felt that he was taking too long to perform simple tasks due to decreasing vision. Daniel also was having difficulty traveling independently in unfamiliar areas and felt that a cane would be helpful to him.

Daniel requested accommodations from his employer, including receiving information in electronic format. Daniel is soft spoken, but he knows how to advocate for himself.

Daniel was sent to TechACCESS of RI for an assistive technology consultation, where he was able to try different

computer screen magnification software, as well as video magnification products. The ability to test the various products on the market assisted Daniel to make an informed decision on the products that best met his needs. Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired was then able to provide the assistive technology necessary for Daniel to maintain his employment.

Daniel was provided with orientation to his neighborhood, as well as a cane by the mobility instructor. He was provided with information about public transportation and other community resources in Rhode Island. Learning about resources in Rhode Island was essential for Daniel as he is originally from Massachusetts.

As a result of rehabilitation services, his strengths and abilities, Daniel has been able to maintain his employment and perform the essential tasks of his job as well as a non-disabled individual.

**Client:** John Parisi  
**Occupation:** Graphic Designer  
**Employer:** Self Employed  
**Counselors:** Teresa Scaramuzzo-DiMattia  
and Patty Ianiere

John has experienced a speech impairment for most of his life. He is not able to speak fluently, which affects his ability to interact with co-workers and customers on a job. John is a very motivated, organized hard-worker who felt that he could obtain and maintain employment despite his disability. He is a gifted artist and has strong skills in graphic design. He referred himself to the Office of Rehabilitation Services in February 2009 with the intent of finding a job. During his involvement with ORS, John designed a plan to become self-employed. He developed a fundraising/graphic arts company called *Anchor Graphic Works*. His company is unique in the services he plans to provide.

When John first came to ORS he was a baseball coach at his community high school. Not any easy job given his speech impairment, but his determination helped him to succeed. One of the teams' annual fundraising efforts is a commemorative booklet that is produced to sell to family and friends. Businesses are solicited to place



ads and the players sell the books. John decided that this would be an opportunity for him to use his skills.

He worked with his ORS counselors to develop a business plan, which was reviewed by the Self-Employment Committee at ORS. Several reviews and planning decisions occurred, ensuring that he had a sound plan that had the greatest potential for success. Once all questions were answered, John started on the exciting road of self-employment. ORS has been involved in acquiring start-up supplies, equipment, computers, technical consultation and assistance for John.

While his speech will always continue to challenge him, John has made great strides in learning to work around his barriers. He has shown strength, resolve, and initiative throughout his time with ORS.

In August 2010, John filed his articles of organization, officially registering his business with the State of Rhode Island. He has hired his salesman and is targeting the Spring of 2011 for his

first two fundraising books to be produced. He has also acquired some graphic design work for a local organizations' charity fundraiser, and for a couple of candidates in their upcoming elections as well.

## Anchor (Graphic Works) Away!



**Client:** Ryan Valentino  
**Occupation:** Food Server  
**Employer:** Gulf Coast Enterprises  
**Counselor:** Danielle Williams



Ryan was referred to the Office of Rehabilitation for the purpose of transition planning by his high school in 2004. Ryan had been receiving support services from his high school. In order for Ryan to achieve his goal of working independently, he attended with support from ORS the East Bay Transition Academy where he was able to experience many different work settings and to learn the skills for daily living. Through ORS and the Transition Academy, Ryan obtained a job with Gulf Coast Enterprises at the Newport Navy Base where he serves food to individuals who live and work there.

Ryan's involvement with the Office of Rehabilitation Services also made it possible for him to obtain his drivers license. The Office of Rehabilitation Services assisted him with taking part in a driving evaluation and then taking specialized driving lessons. Having his license not only makes it possible for Ryan to transport himself to and from work, but it also gives him the independence he needs in everyday life.

Ryan is a hardworking individual who is an asset to any company as he is dedicated, reliable and competent.

**Client:** Emily Moore  
**Occupation:** House Manager  
**Employer:** Tanner House  
**Counselor:** Patricia Keating

Emily is a very pleasant, articulate, intelligent, and motivated woman who appears younger than her 40 years. She has strong clerical skills, learns new applications easily, and has good attention to detail.

In November 2007 Emily requested ORS services for the second time. She had been dealing with some challenges that hindered her from getting and keeping a job.

ORS and the Providence Skills Center worked together to help her update her computer skills so that she could obtain work that would allow her to utilize her very good clerical skills and attention to detail. She attended the Customer Service Training program at the Providence Skills Center, as well as the DB Grant Customer Service Training held in an actual Call Center which focused on computer applications and software.

While Emily was working in a temporary job with Labor Ready, she applied for the House Manager position at Tanner House. She accepted the position, has an apartment as part of her benefit package, and absolutely loves her job. She is an excellent House Manager and her employer is very pleased with her job performance as she is able to handle the wide variety of tasks and duties, and possesses the “people skills” to work effectively with the house members. Her well-developed clerical skills come in handy too! This position also allows Emily to attend classes at CCRI where she has been enrolled since 2009, as her hours are somewhat flexible. Emily will earn her Associates Degree in Social Services with a focus in substance abuse.

Emily has a renewed optimism and confidence in her ability not only to successfully perform her job of House Manager, but to also plan for a better and brighter future for her and her son.

**Client:** Elly  
**Occupation:** Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)  
**Counselor:** Bonnie Flanagan



A 52-year old woman came to ORS for help getting a job. She has had some great times in her life: living in the Virgin Islands....owning a restaurant with her husband... and living the good life. However, the use of alcohol slowly crept up on her and interfered with her personal life and ability to work. Multiple efforts with rehabilitation, periods of sobriety and then relapse prevented her from having stability in her life.

Vocational counseling and guidance was an integral part of her rehabilitation. She met with her counselor frequently to discuss issues in her life and stay focused on her job search. Several attempts at employment did not work out, so they explored obtaining training to increase her employment options. She loved helping others.

When Elly applied to ORS, she wanted to work. She was living at the Salvation Army, and she was soon to graduate from the program. She worked in their office as part of her rehabilitation and did well within the structure of the program. Elly and her Rehabilitation Counselor discussed various options of employment and training, but most of all she wanted to work immediately and have an income. She presented herself quite well with great interpersonal skills. Elly and her Rehabilitation Counselor worked together to develop an employment plan to reflect some of her past work and interests, but it would not have her working quickly. She was soon to move into a sober (halfway) house and needed a job.

She completed Certified Nursing Assistant Training at People In Partnership, where she was a star student. This was actually a great boost to her self confidence. Although Elly may have been successful at other faster paced programs, this program worked out well for her. After completing the program, a job search ensued where Elly and her Rehabilitation Counselor met or talked on the phone frequently. Finally she secured employment, albeit 3rd shift at a very nice Rehabilitation/Nursing Home on the East Side of Providence. Her case was successfully closed but Elly has maintained contacts with her support systems, as well as frequent telephone conversations with her Rehabilitation Counselor.

# Standards and Performance Indicators as of 9/30/10

## Standard 1 Employment Outcomes

Indicator 1.1 - Number of Employment Outcomes - Federal Standard Equal to or greater than prior year

FY 2005	65 greater
FY 2006	36 greater
FY 2007	9 greater
FY 2008	5 greater
FY 2009	6 greater
FY 2010	188 less

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

FY 2005	64.28%
FY 2006	59.79%
FY 2007	59.89%
FY 2008	62.81%
FY 2009	62.79%
FY 2010	40.72%

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

FY 2005	90.57%
FY 2006	92.80%
FY 2007	92.62%
FY 2008	95.73%
FY 2009	96.30%
FY 2010	97.89%

Indicator 1.4 -Competitively Employed (minimum wage or higher) who have a Significant Disability

Federal Standard	62.40%
FY 2005	100.00%
FY 2006	100.00%
FY 2000	100.00%
FY 2008	100.00%
FY2009	100.00%
FY 2010	100.00%

Indicator 1.5 -Earnings Ratio of Minimum Wage or higher for ORS vs. State Average

Federal Standard	Ratio of .52
FY 2005	.539
FY 2006	.532
FY 2007	.530
FY 2008	.520
FY2009	.510
FY 2010	.540

Indicator 1.6 - Self-Support (report own income at closure vs. own income at application)

Federal Standard 53% mathematical difference

FY 2005	63.09%
FY 2006	63.15%
FY 2007	64.78%
FY 2008	55.43%
FY 2009	54.40%
FY 2010	62.95%

## Standard 2 - Minority Ratio Equal Access to Services

Federal Standard Ratio of .80 for n=100+

FY 2005	.906
FY 2006	.927
FY 2007	.854

FY 2008	.884
FY 2009	.847
FY 2010	.890

## Building a Better Partnership in the Community

**State Rehabilitation Council** is a citizen advisory body appointed by the Governor. The Council is consumer-controlled in that a majority of its members are individuals with disabilities and not employed by the State VR Agency. Members represent agencies, organizations and other councils of and for individuals with disabilities in Rhode Island. The SRC in conjunction with the VR agency jointly conduct the comprehensive statewide needs assessment of individuals with disabilities in Rhode Island, develop and agree to the state's annual goals and priorities in carrying out the VR program, annually evaluate the state's performance relative to its goals, and conducts customer satisfaction surveys. Together the SRC and the state VR agency partner to assure that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely and effective VR services.

**Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired** is an advisory council appointed by the Governor that advises the SBVI regarding the programs provided by that agency; works collaboratively with the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council; and provides oversight responsibility to the Independent Living Program for the Elderly Blind.

**RI Council on Assistive Technology (RICAT)** is the advisory body to the RI Assistive Technology program - Assistive Technology Access Partnership which is funded through the AT Act. RICAT is actively involved in legislative and other initiatives that will increase access to assistive technology for Rhode Islanders.

**RI Statewide Independent Living Council (RISILC)** jointly develops and submits, in conjunction with the ORS, the State Plan for Independent Living Services and Centers for Independent Living. They also monitor, review and evaluate the implementation of the State Plan.

**State Committee of Blind Vendors** is composed of representatives elected from among all licensed blind vendors within the state. The Committee participates actively in carrying out all of the program management responsibilities.

DHS does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, age, religion or sex in acceptance for or provision of services, employment or treatment in its educational and other programs and activities.

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



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