

Rhode Island
Department of Human Services
Office of Rehabilitation Services

ANNUAL UPDATE
FFY2007
STATE PLAN
for
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

2001-2006

Raymond A. Carroll

Administrator



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
Office of the Director

June 23, 2006

United States Department of Education
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
Attention: Pedro Romero
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W. PCP Room 5007
Washington, DC 20202-2800

Re: Transmittal of the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services Annual State Plan FY2007 Update for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program under Title I, Part B and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program under Title VI, Part B of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended

Dear Mr. Romero:

The purpose of this correspondence is to submit for approval the original and two copies of the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services Annual State Plan FY2007 updates for the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the State Plan for Supported Employment. The State Rehabilitation Council assisted the Designated State Unit (DSU) in the development of the State Plan update. Moreover, the DSU conducted a public meeting to provide an opportunity for individuals with disabilities to comment on the plan; and actively consulted with the Client Assistance Program.

Rhode Island has selected the option of submitting a separate "stand alone" plan under Section 112 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). The effective date for the Annual Update to the State Plan is October 1, 2006.

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

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|-------------------------------|---|
| Attachment 4.2 (c): | Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations |
| Attachment 4.9(c) (4): | Evidence of Collaboration Regarding Supported Employment Services and Extended Services |
| Attachment 4.11(b): | Comprehensive System of Personal Development |

- Attachment 4.12:** Assessments; Estimates; Goals and Priorities; Strategies; and Program Reports
- (a): Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities and Need to Establish, Develop or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs
 - (b): Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Costs of Services
 - (c)(1): State's goals and Priorities
 - (c)(2)(A): Order of Selection
 - (c)(3): Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds
 - (d): State's Strategies and Use of Title I funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities
 - (d)(1): To Address Needs Identified in the Comprehensive Assessment and to Achieve Identified Goals and Priorities
 - (d)(2): To Carryout Outreach Activities to Identify and Serve Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities Who are Minorities
 - (d)(3): To Overcome Identified Barriers relating to Equitable Access to and Participation of Individuals with Disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program
 - (e): Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

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

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

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

Sincerely



Ronald A. Lebel
Director

**STATE PLAN FOR THE STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES PROGRAM
AND
STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT FOR THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM**

STATE: Rhode Island

AGENCY: Office of Rehabilitation Services/Vocational Rehabilitation

AGENCY TYPE: GENERAL BLIND COMBINED X

SECTION I: LEGAL BASIS AND STATE CERTIFICATIONS

1.1 The Office of Rehabilitation Services/Vocational Rehabilitation (name of designated State agency or designated State unit) is authorized to submit this State plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended¹ and its supplement under title VI, part B of the Act.¹

1.2 As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I, part B of the Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, the Department of Human Services (name of the designated State agency)² agrees to operate and administer the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program in accordance with the provisions of this State plan⁴, the Act, and all applicable regulations⁵, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary. Funds made available under section III of the Act are used solely for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under title I and the administration of this State plan.

1.3 As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI, part B of the 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 plan⁶, the Act, and all applicable regulations⁷, 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.

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.

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

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

1.7 The Director, Department of Human Services (title of State officer) has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under this State plan and its supplement.

18 The **Director, Department of Human Services** (title of State officer) has the authority to submit this State plan for vocational rehabilitation services and the State plan supplement for supported employment services.

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

1.10 The effective date of this State plan and its supplement is October 1, 2006.


(Signature)

Ronald A. Lebel
(Typed Name of Signatory)

July 7, 2006
(Date)

Director
(Title)

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, "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 Act may be awarded without an approved State plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the 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 Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the title I State plan in accordance with section 625(a) of the Act.

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

ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.2(c)

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

The Office of Rehabilitation Services appreciates the time and effort of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) in reviewing the Annual Update of the State Plan for FFY 2007. The SRC is a valued partner in fulfilling the mission of the vocational rehabilitation program – successful high-quality employment outcomes for people with disabilities. The ORS also appreciates the SRC's commitment to support the activities of the Agency pertaining to strengthening relationships with employers and other community organizations.

During 2005 the State Rehabilitation Council assisted the Office of Rehabilitation Services to achieve its mission. Some of the accomplishments and activities were:

Participated in the development of a comprehensive needs assessment and strategic plan

Chaired the Annual Employer Honor Roll event which celebrates Rhode Island employers for excellence in hiring and supporting employees with disabilities

Participated in regional training for SRC members

Advised ORS on policies and procedures

Policy and State Plan Committee contributed in revising 19 ORS policies

Reviewed the Agency's 2005 accomplishments on the RSA Standards and Indicators

SRC Employment Subcommittee participated in 2005 ORS Strategic Planning Session

The Annual Report of the SRC has been reviewed, and the following information has been provided.

Members of the Council attended the Public Forums, co-sponsored by the Governor's Commission on Disabilities, ORS, and other entities in FFY 2006, held throughout the state to listen to the issues identified by individuals with disabilities as well as service providers. Many members actively participated in the discussions or presented at these forums.

The Council held a joint meeting with the Office of Rehabilitation Services through the presentation of the Annual State Plan Update for FFY 2006, in June, 2005 in an attempt to offer the general public additional opportunity to address our membership.

The most important and critical work of the Council occurs in the committees. During FFY 2006 the committee chairs are holding scheduled meetings, with published agendas available for all Council members and guests to plan attendance. Summaries of the committees' activities are included in this document.

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

Employment Committee

The Employment Committee participated in the development of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment that is periodically required of the Office of Rehabilitation Services in partnership with the State Rehabilitation

Council, along with the Sherlock Center at Rhode Island College. This mandate exists as part of the Rehabilitation Act.

This Committee also took part in a strategic planning retreat with members of ORS and made recommendations in the areas of program evaluation, marketing, outreach, and service provision. A sample of specific issues addressed includes; measure types of jobs, especially professional; increasing marketing and outreach with chambers of commerce and employers; and, increasing employer and employee retention support.

Members of the Committee also took part in the Employer Honor Roll, recognizing employers of persons with disabilities for their roles in hiring, integrating, promoting and supporting persons with disabilities in their organizations.

Nomination and Leadership

2005 was a very successful year for the Nominating and Leadership Committee. To address the growing needs of individuals with disabilities, the Leadership Committee conducts an ongoing search for new members that will encourage new ideas and promote a broader-based vision for the Council.

Several meetings were held during the year and the Committee nominated five (5) new members. The Committee also presented a Slate of Officers for the coming year.

Quality Assurance

The purpose of this Committee is to assist the Office of Rehabilitation Services in ensuring the best intervention possible for the Consumer. There are independent surveys completed both on a local and regional basis to gather data from clients that have received services, currently involved in active intervention and successful closed case. These surveys further identify what is and is not working for the clientele.

State Plan and Policy Committee

The SRC State Plan and Policy Committee experienced one of their busiest years in recent memory throughout 2005. The Committee assisted in the review, comment, and development, which resulted in changes and revisions to nineteen (19) ORS Policies.

The policies which have been vetted through the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) process, include: Agency Structure 11/05, Motor Voter Act 11/05, Eligibility and Ineligibility 11/05, Individualized Plan for Employment 11/05, Homemaker 3/05, Comparable Services and Benefits 11/05, Guidelines for Determination of Financial Need 11/05, Counseling Guidance and Referral 1/05, Post-employment Services 11/05, Guidelines for Serving the Learning Disabled (obsolete) 11/05, Workers Compensation 11/05, Post-Secondary Training and VR Services 3/05, Serving Individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing 11/05, Extended Employment Client Review 11/05, Physical and Mental Restoration Services 11/05, Maintenance

11/05, Reversion to Donor 3/05, and Transition 3/05, Dictation Format and Case Recording 11/05.

Issues and Responses

ISSUE #1:

(a) “The SRC is concerned about ORS’s use of the Career Ladder as well as its use of short-term training options. The SRC recognizes that ORS must meet certain Federal requirements for case closing. However, the SRC is concerned that short-term training options or entry level jobs used with the Career Ladder Program may undermine consumers informed choice. (b) Some ORS consumers may be interested in and capable of higher level positions but may be counseled to participate in short-term training options or take entry level jobs because of Agency pressure to meet Federal Standards and Indicators. The SRC would like assurances that, despite high average counselor caseload, ORS remains committed to the Informed Choice provisions of the Rehabilitation Act. The SRC would like to ensure that ORS encourages Careers rather than Career Ladders or Entry Level jobs, to its consumers whenever possible.”

RESPONSE #1:

(a) ORS is firmly committed to providing ongoing employment opportunities which recognize and promote Informed Choice for consumers of the public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. Informed Choice is firmly established as the cornerstone of the VR program. ORS is in full agreement that employment goals

for our consumers must be consistent with the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, and capabilities of our consumers so that they may obtain or maintain gainful employment.

There has been some confusion in the use and term “career ladder”. ORS uses the term “career ladder” to signify that some occupations necessitate entering the field on the first rung of the occupational ladder in order to get the necessary baseline skills, experience and knowledge. Once experienced in the field, then advancement to the next step in the career ladder is a possibility. Many of the entry-level jobs in these occupations lead to advancement and higher skill paying jobs. Many of these jobs are semi-professional and offer individuals who prefer hands-on training versus academic training a viable career choice. ORS understands the meaning of “career ladder” as referenced in RSA Policy Directive 97-04 as recognizing the significant difference between “suitable employment” and “employment objective”. We believe the “Career Ladder Program” which you refer to in your comments of 6-13-06 refers to a program which has not been in existence in well over two years and was initially proposed to ORS by a Community Rehabilitation Program back in 2003.

(b) Despite the growing size of the consumer base which the Rhode Island Vocational Rehabilitation program serves, rehabilitation counselors are still expected to meet all Federal Standards and Performance Indicators. In particular, four of the Standards and Performance Indicators directly relate to the need to provide high quality and good paying jobs (see Standard and Indicator’s 1.3, 1.4, .1.5, 1.6). Additionally, ORS recognizes that many “entry level jobs” also provide an employment opportunity for many consumers who over time may continue on through experience and knowledge, to obtain a higher paying job in their field.

ISSUE #2:

The SRC is also interested in learning more about the new short term training choices offered since 2005. Specifically, the SRC is interested in knowing what tasks consumers are performing as part of their job training in each of the areas mentioned, (i.e. dog grooming, emergency medical technician)

RESPONSE #2:

ORS has offered to provide the SRC with a presentation by ORS's Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Specialist which highlights some of the short-term training choices offered to our consumers. The ORS-CRP Specialist has also created a "Vendor Profile" which provides a comprehensive analysis of all Community Rehabilitation Programs (both Supported Employment and Non-Supported Employment Programs), which includes all community-based vendors and all short-term training programs, and outcomes for each program provider. ORS would be pleased to share this "Vendor Profile" which has been found to be a beneficial for counselors and consumers.

ISSUE #3:

The SRC is also interested in obtaining data on the types of occupations and wages associated with Supported Employment Services.

RESPONSE #3:

The Rehabilitation Services Administration currently provides “Research and Statistics” on many of the results relating to employment outcomes for each state related to the Title 1 Basic Support Program on their website (<http://rsadev.net>). Additionally, ORS utilizes its Management Information System to detail the listing of the types of jobs attained for each of its consumers and would be pleased to share this data with SRC as well.

ISSUE #4:

Transportation barriers seem to be a major concern for individuals with disabilities. The SRC is glad to see that ORS is addressing transportation concerns where it is able to do so.

RESPONSE #4:

In the 2005 ORS statewide “Comprehensive Needs Assessment Report” ORS had identified transportation as one of the major areas of focus for our consumers. ORS looks forward to collaborating with the SRC in the newly formed Transportation Sub-Committee to reduce transportation barriers thereby offering new employment opportunities to consumers of the public VR program.

ATTACHMENT 4.9 (c) (4)

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

For FFY 2007, the Office of Rehabilitation Service (ORS) will continue to partner with vendors of supported employment services so that customers can make informed choices about supported, integrated, and competitive employment options. ORS will continue to participate with the Division of Behavioral Health and Division of Developmental Disabilities through membership in the respective Supported Employment Advisory Councils. ORS provides the councils with quarterly statistics regarding outcomes by vendor and an analysis of the occupations and wages of those individuals who have become successfully employed. The Advisory Council functions as a resource in clarifying procedures, addressing issues, and reviewing quarterly statistics about employed individuals. ORS staff also provide ongoing training and technical assistance to the supported employment vendors.

Collaboration between Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) and the One-Stop Centers (netWORKri) continues with four Employer Service Networks operating. The Ocean State Employer Service Networks (OSESN) are intended to improve employment services and outcomes by sharing resource knowledge and offering employment leads to each other. Each Ocean State Employer Service Network consists of CRP representatives, ORS staff, and the Department of Labor and Training personnel. In FFY 2007, it is anticipated that the Employer Service Networks may consolidate in response to changes within the netWORKri One-Stop Center system.

In FFY 2006, the Maher Center's Supported Employment Program expanded its options to include a revamped laundry facility. This provided a valuable employment option for ORS customers in the East Bay area of the state. ORS assisted the Maher Center in making modifications to the program, thereby creating an integrated, competitive setting. ORS helped fund the training of workers at the laundry utilizing supported employment services. In FFY 2007, this supported employment site will continue to provide an additional service option for customers.

ORS is a member of an interagency steering committee that provides oversight to the "Family Support 360" five-year systems change grant awarded to the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College. This grant focuses on students with the most significant developmental disabilities experiencing a seamless transition from high school to employment. The work of the Steering Committee will continue throughout FFY 2006 and FFY 2007.

ATTACHMENT 4.11 (b)

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

The Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) is committed to providing quality rehabilitation services to its customers. Our commitment to this standard has resulted in a Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling being required of all newly appointed Rehabilitation Counselors. ORS has developed a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) as a systemic approach to developing its human resources. This system is intended to ensure that there is an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation, direct service, supervisory, administrative, fiscal and support personnel. Our CSPD plan follows:

DATA SYSTEM

Personnel Data and Projections

- In FFY 2006, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program has served approximately 6,900 individuals, with an average caseload of 140. Rhode Island has a total of 92, full time equivalent (FTE) positions which includes 41 counselor positions. Since September, 2005, ORS has filled 3 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I and 1 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II vacancies, all with Master's Degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling. Currently, there are 4 vacancies for rehabilitation counselors and 3 counselors are out on maternity leave with another to start maternity leave in July.
- Over the next 3 to 5 year period, ORS estimates that approximately 24 individuals (administrators, supervisor, counselors and support staff) will be eligible for retirement.

Given this number of employees that could potentially leave state service, ORS is actively pursuing graduates from local universities and colleges.

Personnel Sources

- ORS has cultivated a relationship with the two area colleges that offer graduate training in rehabilitation counseling: Assumption College in Worcester, MA and Salve Regina University in Newport, R.I. There are approximately 97 enrolled in the graduate programs (65 at Assumption and 32 at Salve Regina) and 29 expected to graduate in May 2007 from these programs.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Institutions of Higher Education

- ORS has ongoing communication with Assumption College and Salve Regina University to ensure that the present and projected needs of ORS are considered in the program planning. In addition to the satellite Masters' degree program offered to ORS staff through Assumption College, Salve Regina University is also offering a master level program through a combination of distance learning, facility-based courses at a satellite office in Providence and their Newport, R.I. campus.
- ORS continues to provide both practicum and internship sites for their graduate students.
- Personnel from ORS teach in these programs.
- The ORS Training Coordinator serves on the Training Project Advisory Council at

Assumption College.

- The ORS Administrator serves on the Advisory Board for the Rehabilitation Counseling Program at Salve Regina University.

Professional Associations

- In addition, efforts to recruit qualified personnel have consisted of maintaining an active relationship with the Rhode Island Chapter of the National Rehabilitation Association (RIRA).

Special Efforts to Recruit, Prepare, Maintain Personnel from Minority Backgrounds and Individuals with Disabilities

- ORS makes every effort to hire staff in accordance with the Agency's affirmative action policies.
- ORS job announcements are distributed to community-based agencies and the internet to attract qualified individuals, particularly, individuals with disabilities and minority backgrounds.
- ORS has hired a number of qualified individuals with disabilities and minority backgrounds (visual impairments, deafness, etc).

PERSONNEL STANDARDS

Adequately Prepared and Trained Staff

- Rhode Island does not have a state approved or recognized certification, licensing, or registration requirement for rehabilitation counselors. However, a Bill was introduced in the

legislature this year regarding licensure. ORS is expecting and preparing for Rhode Island to obtain licensure, if not this year, within the near future.

- Rhode Island has elected to base its minimum personnel standards for recruitment of counselors on the requirement of a MA degree in rehabilitation counseling. This degree requirement exceeds the national CRC requirements.

New Personnel

- All new personnel are expected to meet the standard of a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from an accredited program.
- ORS has been able to fill all vacancies with individuals with a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling since 10/01/2000.
- ORS has worked aggressively with the institutions of higher education to recruit qualified individuals to fill vacancies.
- Rhode Island expects that it will continue to hire individuals who meet the standard.

Existing Personnel

- As of June 2006, 36 out of 41 ORS counselors meet the standard (88% compliance), all field VR Supervisors and Administrators meet the CSPD standard. Five counselors do not meet the standard.

- The counselors who do not have a Masters degree in Rehabilitation Counseling are functioning within the parameters of an approved plan to achieve the standard and are limited in their ability to practice independently.
- ORS plan to address, by August 2006, the CSPD training needs of the 5 individuals in the following manner:
 1. to update each individuals training plan.
 2. to clarify the CSPD requirements of their jobs.
 3. to educate the counselors regarding the upcoming trends in proposed licensure.
 4. to establish a monitoring system for quarterly updates on staff progress with their plans.
 5. to engage supervisor and HRD personnel in the process.
- ORS expects that staff will be in compliance within 24 months (2008).
- ORS continues to dedicate resources to support the CSPD plan.
- ORS encourages retraining and hiring of staff from minority backgrounds and staff with disabilities.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- ORS recognizes the importance of insuring that its staff has the necessary skills and abilities to provide quality services in a professional and timely manner.

- ORS Counselors also have the opportunity to participate in training programs offered by LEAs and the Department of Education, consistent with the CSPD requirements of the Rehabilitation Act and IDEA.
- Every ORS employee is offered the opportunity to participate in training opportunities through the Office of Training and Development and other educational institutions of higher learning which will enhance their skills and promote professional development.
- A new training coordinator has been recently hired and will be conducting a needs assessment of personnel training needs by September 2006.
- The needs assessment once completed will be analyzed for priorities and a training schedule will be determined and implemented.
- A focus on employment-related training continues to be emphasized through Labor Market Information, building employer relationships, job development and placement techniques and job-person matching.
- According to the Rhode Island Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment, transportation once again has shown to be one of the biggest barriers to employment for people with disabilities, and ORS has partnered with the SRC to bring in qualified professionals to promote new training opportunities and innovative service delivery systems to assist in overcoming this barrier to employment.
- The training plan continues to address training opportunities presented by the inclusion of the Rehabilitation Act into the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and specifically in the One-

Stop Career Centers and issues related to the implementation of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act. It is expected that new regulations regarding the Ticket to Work will be released this fall. Once, they are finalized, training will be made available to staff.

- In order to retain qualified staff and in anticipation of retirement plans, ORS will offer leadership development training, succession planning and capacity-building opportunities to interested staff. This is of particular importance, given the number of personnel that could potentially retire in the near future.
- The Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts in Boston has been awarded the New England Rehabilitation Education Program (NERCEP) grant and which will be utilized to provide state-of-the-art training programs for all counselor and supervisory staff at ORS as well.

COMMUNICATION NEEDS

- Interpreters and CART reporters are available for staff to communicate with diverse customer populations, for staff trainings and supervision.
- Additional training will include more information on use of the AT&T language line, how to access and use an interpreter effectively, and other cultural issues that may impact on the rehabilitation process.
- The Information Services Technician manages the ORS and the ATAP web pages, has expertise in providing materials in alternate formats and develops electronic tools for

- counselors. ORS assures that all information disseminated to staff with disabilities and customers is accessible.
- ORS recently participated in a cultural diversity training with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. Members of ORS' Cultural Diversity Cadre will have an ongoing role in training in this area.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM

- ORS relies on supervisory observations and self identified training needs to enhance professional development
- The annual needs assessment conducted by the training coordinator elicits input from counselors and supervisors regarding training needs.
- If a corrective action plan is necessary, the corrective action plan would be in compliance with the CSPD.

COORDINATION OF THE CSPD and INSERVICE TRAINING

- ORS will continue to implement a CSPD plan as part of the in service training program.
- The plan for training will focus on program areas that enhance the ability of state personnel to function in their present position and to acquire new skills to enhance the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with the most significant disabilities.

- ORS will continue to coordinate transition services according to IDEA. ORS has a counselor assigned to every high school in the state to work cooperatively with students, parents, special education professionals and 504 coordinators to develop quality transition plans.

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

- Pursuant to the Act, ORS offers to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) the opportunity to comment on the CSPD.
- The SRC did not raise any issues with the CSPD plan that was included in the Annual Update to the State Plan for FFY2007; therefore, no comments are attached.
- The ORS Administrator reports to the SRC, on CSPD efforts, on a regular basis.

ATTACHMENT 4.12(a)

RESULTS OF STATE WIDE ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS FOR FFY 2007

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, mandates the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS), in partnership with the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to periodically complete a statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities. In FFY 2006, the Needs Assessment Report was developed from six separate surveys that document the employment needs of individuals with disabilities.

The most recent survey, mentioned in last year's annual update but distributed and analyzed in FFY2006, was a needs assessment questionnaire conducted by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services/Office of Rehabilitation Services and the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council. The survey was distributed to Office of Rehabilitation Services supervisors and counselors, Community Rehabilitation Programs, and netWORKri/One Stop Center staff. The results of this survey are incorporated into the Needs Assessment Report and are being utilized by the State Rehabilitation Council and the Office of Rehabilitation Services to assist in the planning and development of a five-year strategic plan for the Office of Rehabilitation Services, focusing on employment of individuals with disabilities.

The survey was designed by a committee consisting of representatives from the Office of Rehabilitation Services, the State Rehabilitation Council, and the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities at of Rhode Island College. The intent of the survey was to identify the interventions that people with disabilities need in order to get and keep work, the availability of these services throughout the state, the obstacles that customers confront in attempting to work, the groups of people with disabilities who are underserved, and the resource/training needs of personnel. The purpose of the survey was to assist the Department of Human

Services/Office of Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council in examining program design, delivery systems and gaps in services so that the agency can more effectively help individuals with disabilities to become and stay employed.

Several themes emerged from the 53% of the questionnaires that were returned. In determining what people with disabilities need most in order to achieve an employment outcome skills training and education, support from a job developer, transportation, and job retention services were identified as the major areas of need. When these areas were rated for availability, skills training and education, support from a job developer, and job retention services were rated the highest in terms of availability.

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment Survey reinforced findings from other studies that some of the main barriers to individuals with disabilities working include the following: transportation obstacles, lack of skills to compete in the job market, individuals' expectations of rapid ascent to an ideal job and fear of losing benefits. In addition to the barriers noted above, the Comprehensive Needs Assessment highlighted the need to continue addressing access and employment outcome issues with underserved and minority populations.

In FFY 2006, the State Rehabilitation Council (10/24/05) and the entire Office of Rehabilitation Services staff (11/1/05) participated in planning meetings to formulate possible strategies to overcome some of the issues identified by the Needs Assessment Report. The feedback and brainstorming from these two meetings were organized into a Strategic Planning matrix which prioritizes topics and solutions for FFY 2007 and in preparation for the five-year plan.

The areas that we identified include the following:

- To ensure that our Community Rehabilitation Programs reflect the employment needs of customers and labor market trends.
- To evaluate the impact of interventions on preparing customers to compete for jobs.
- To examine group work as an additional resource to better address the employment needs of our customers.
- To minimize the impact of transportation barriers on customer employment options.
- To develop a marketing plan for the agency that enhances employment outcomes for our customers.
- To establish a more structured relationship with the local colleges so that student access to supports, funding and preparation for jobs is more organized.
- To examine the task demands of field staff so that timely response to and ongoing contact with customers is assured.

ATTACHMENT 4.12(b)

**ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED
COSTS OF SERVICES (PROJECTIONS FOR FFY 2007)**

I. NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR
SERVICES UNDER THIS STATE PLAN:

For FFY 2005, there were 2,039 new applicants, additionally, 1,842 individuals were deemed eligible. There were a total number of 1,197 individuals who developed their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

For FFY 2006, ORS projects 2,056 new applicants, and expects 1,950 individuals to become eligible for ORS services. ORS anticipates that 1,215 individuals will develop their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

For FFY 2007, ORS projects 2,100 new applicants, and expects 2,000 individuals to become eligible for ORS services. ORS anticipates that 1,500 individuals will develop their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

II. NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER TITLE I
AND TITLE VI AND NUMBERS TO BE SERVED IN EACH ORDER OF
SELECTION PRIORITY CATEGORY:

In FFY2006, the projected total number of clients to be served under an Individualized Plan for Employment is 3,070. One hundred percent of those being served are classified

in the Order of Selection as either category #1 “most significant” or category #2 “significantly disabled”.

In FFY2007, the projected total number of clients to be served under an Individualized Plan for Employment is 3,100. One hundred percent of those expected to be served will be classified in the Order of Selection as either category #1 “most significant” or category #2 “significantly disabled”.

For FFY 2007, ORS is expected to serve:

Category #1 (Most significant)	2,480
Category #2 (Significantly disabled)	620

For both FFY 2006 and FFY 2007, the total number of cases at ORS is expected to exceed 6,907.

III. COST OF SERVICES FOR PROJECTED TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS TO BE SERVED INCLUDING SERVICE COSTS UNDER EACH OOS CATEGORY:

Average expenditure per client in FFY 2007 is estimated to be:	\$ 1,790
Total Cost of services for OOS category #1 are estimated to be:	\$4,439,200
Total Cost of services for OOS category #2 are estimated to be:	\$1,109,800

**ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c) (1)
STATE'S GOALS & PRIORITIES FOR FFY 2007**

The state's goals and priorities are as follows:

TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES BY 5% ANNUALLY

TRANSITION SERVICES:

- Addressing the transition of high school students to post-secondary training and employment by coordinating and expanding opportunities will continue to be a priority. ORS and Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) has extended the five-year Cooperative Agreement which enhances services for transitioning students in the areas of vocational evaluations and training through the five regional assessment centers. ORS and RIDE are utilizing the shared vision and philosophy contained in the ORS/RIDE Memorandum of Understanding to prepare students to be more self sufficient and prepare for eventual employment. The matrix of services and responsibilities assists in providing consistent case practices statewide. Two Transition Academies are beginning to achieve employment outcomes, primarily for students who have not chosen to pursue academic postsecondary education. Overcoming transportation barriers is part of their training. Additional Transition Academies are being explored for FFY 2006 and FFY2007.
- Summer work experience opportunities are continuing to be expanded. Goodwill Industries provides community-based experiences. The School for the Deaf has implemented a summer work experience program through ORS fee-for-service and is in the beginning stages of implementing a work experience program during the school year.
- ORS will continue active participation in recruiting high school students for the annual Youth Leadership Forum. Previous participants have returned to the Forum as mentors and leaders.

- ORS will continue to work with the three public institutions of higher education to ensure equal access to training opportunities and to encourage work experiences while in training. ORS will actively recruit college students to participate in the state summer internship program which provides students with opportunities to explore and gain experience in their chosen careers through working in state agencies.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT:

- ORS is participating in Supported Employment Advisory Council meetings with the Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals including the Division of Developmental Disabilities program, and Division of Behavioral Health Services in order to jointly plan for services and funding after clients have completed supported employment services through ORS.

TRANSPORTATION:

- As a result of the ORS needs assessment that indicates unmet needs in overcoming transportation barriers, increased emphasis will be placed on the need for travel training during IEP and IPE planning sessions.
- ORS is seeking to collaboratively work with Massachusetts and Connecticut in purchasing a modified van for vehicle evaluations for individuals with specialized needs.
- ORS is continuing to increase consumer choice by certifying additional travel training programs.

JOB TRAINING:

- ORS will continue to emphasize On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities. In FFY2005, twenty-five (OJT) occurred. ORS has found this option has a high rate of employment success and will continue to expand its availability.

- Outreach efforts are underway to diversify the referral sources and improved communication with vendors by reaching out to agencies that work with minorities and underserved populations.
- ORS is working to decrease the gap between the skills employers need and the skills clients have, through expanded short-term training. New training choices in FFY2005 included heavy machinery equipment, dog-grooming, floral design, and digital printing operation. In FFY2006 Emergency Medical Technician certification training have started. ORS is including the options of employer-initiated certificate training through Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI). For FFY 2007, ORS is also exploring a retail training program through Providence Place Mall Skill Center. This skill center is a collaboration between the Providence/Cranston Work Force Investment Board, Cranston Community Action and the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce. This training will result in participants receiving one of the following two levels of certification – one recognized by stores within the Providence Place Mall and the other a nationally recognized certification in customer service and sales.
- In FFY2005 ORS initiated a new service called Work Try Out which has resulted in successful employment of individuals and has provided an opportunity to develop partnerships with employers. This program will be expanded in FFY 2006 and FFY 2007.
- The Learning Disability (LD) Project will be expanded to all DHS offices. This expansion is based on the number of referrals and demonstrated need. ORS counselors will continue to liaison with individual DHS offices and be a consistent presence. In the past year, two counselors have assumed responsibility for both the Newport and North Kingstown offices. All DHS social workers will be trained in learning disabilities and the screening process using the *Bridges to Practice* model. Offices that have already been trained will be offered further training. The ORS LD liaison will continue to meet with the Education Subcommittee to the Welfare Reform Implementation Task Force and the Department of

Education to expand the services available and expedite the identification of adult learners with special needs. This identification process will lead to consistency within and between agencies. The liaison will continue to work with the Department of Education to construct a survey to be sent to all adult education providers. From this survey, a statewide list will be developed that describes the kinds of services and accommodations that are available at the individual locations. The liaison will continue to work on professional development to ensure that specialized education service providers have the credentialing and resources to provide services. In the past year several LD testing providers have been added to the list of clinicians available for testing. It is expected that outreach efforts will continue throughout the upcoming year.

- ORS is initiating a Job Club in FFY2006 which will enhance clients' ability to be self sufficient in their job search.

RELATIONSHIP WITH EMPLOYERS:

- Interaction with employers has been greatly expanded since the position of Workforce Development Supervisor was filled. ORS continues to be involved at the national and regional level with the CSAVR initiative to share contacts with corporate headquarters of major employers. Results have included use of on-the-job pharmacy technician training at CVS and involvement in banking customer service jobs. ORS is preparing customers for employment through the provision of Interviewing Skills workshops, which include preparing a job application, and resume writing.
- ORS will continue to utilize the Providence Chamber of Commerce Annual Business EXPO to network with employers. ORS will continue to expand its outreach to employers by joining additional chambers of commerce including Central Rhode Island Chamber.

- Twenty-five employers were recruited by the Workforce Development Supervisor to participate in an annual Disability Mentoring Day to assist high school and college students refine their vocational goals. One of the outcomes was a summer internship at a major corporation. ORS will continue to be the leader in the Rhode Island Disability Mentoring Day program.
- ORS has increased customer awareness and participation in employer Job Fairs which are generally held in connection with the netWORKri system.
- ORS in FFY2006 will initiate a taskforce to develop an overall agency Marketing Plan.
- The Workforce Development Supervisor will continue to meet with regional liaisons on a regular basis to share identified needs and strategies.
- Through negotiating on-the-job-training, company tours and netWORKri contacts, ORS will continue to provide technical assistance to employers regarding reasonable accommodations.

BENEFITS and WORK INCENTIVES:

- Benefit planning, both before and after employment, has become an integral part of informed choice in rehabilitation planning. New counselor training will continue to emphasize the importance of benefit counseling. A new Benefits Specialist has been hired and become certified through Cornell University to provide benefits planning.
- Materials explaining Medicaid and Medicare work incentives are available in both English and Spanish and the Social Security website provides access to individuals with other non-English primary languages.
- A concerted effort was successfully made in FFY2005 to provide benefit counseling to customers who are Hearing Impaired or Deaf, with forty individuals receiving the service.

- Benefits planning services are being expanded through group orientations, individualized meetings and community outreach.
- Renewal of the Social Security grant which funds this critical service would ensure continuation of Benefits Counseling.
- Benefit planning now includes information on the new Rhode Island work incentive, effective January 1, 2006, known as the Medicaid Buy-in Waiver. This new incentive will provide individuals with more employment options by overcoming concern about the loss of health insurance benefits.
- Information about Medicare Part D has been provided by the Department of Elderly Affairs and In-Service Training to ORS staff by DHS Medicare representative.
- ORS is publicizing in FFY2006 the Earned Income Tax Credit and free tax filing options available to low income individuals and families.
- Ticket to Work continues to be implemented, resulting in some successful employment outcomes. A new supervisor for this program is being recruited, due to the retirement of the previous supervisor. The components of the program will be reviewed with all staff annually and with new counselors as part of their initial training.

TO INCREASE THE SERVICE AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME RATIOS FOR MINORITY POPULATIONS

- Expanded and closer working relationships with community organizations which primarily serve minority populations is a priority for ORS. Liaisons have been established with organizations such as Genesis Center and International Institute.
- In FFY2006 ORS added to vendors who provide bilingual services. The new vendor provides short-term basic computer training in Central Falls, reducing the transportation issue for individuals in that

geographic area. ORS is developing closer relationships with agencies which provide adult literacy and English as a Second Language.

- ORS has a liaison and regular contact with the Narragansett Tribe in Charlestown, Rhode Island. Referrals, joint planning and cultural sensitivity are shared. ORS is working with the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation to develop a relationship with the Indian Council located in Providence. ORS is utilizing materials from the University of Arizona Research and Training Center on Native Americans. ORS is planning on providing cultural diversity training to its staff through trainings at the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation.
- The Cultural Diversity Cadre facilitates agency wide attention to cultural competence as a foundation for successfully working with diverse populations of individuals with disabilities. The Cadre also monitors agency performance on Standard Two which reviews equal access to services by minority populations.
- In FFY2006 the ORS reception area was modified to be more customer friendly and accessible for individuals who are Deaf or Spanish speaking. The Language Line is predominantly displayed and a TTY phone is also available in the reception area.
- The two netWORKri One-Stop Centers which serve the geographic areas with the highest concentration of minority populations have bilingual staff. The two One-Stop Centers and ORS work together to assist individuals with disabilities in navigating the various systems of service provision.
- Advocating for bilingual ORS staff continues. In FFY2006 there are two bilingual staff.

TO INCREASE CUSTOMER CHOICE AND SATISFACTION

- ORS has added new vendors since the new Community Rehabilitation Specialist (CRP) was hired thus increasing customer's options.

- Additionally all new counselors have been trained in informed choice.
- The new training policy has added greater flexibility for ORS customers when selecting short-term training providers. As described previously, there is much more diversity in the training opportunities which include a wide range of new occupational choices.
- Fact sheets regarding informed choice and transportation planning are distributed widely, and an agency-wide training which was provided to ensure all counselors were aware of the various choices in transportation.
- All policies are being reviewed to ensure that informed choice is reflected clearly.
- Customer satisfaction surveys occurred and were reported in previous years. In FFY 2005, a needs assessment contract was developed and results reported, in preparation for a new five-year plan. This will be the foundation for planning for program improvement.
- The ORS Customer Relations Office will continue to provide early intervention services for early resolution of issues.
- In FFY2006 a vendor profile has been developed that includes information about geographic area served, services provided and employment outcomes. This resource will be available to consumers in making informed choices about services and service providers.

ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c)(2)(a)
ORDER OF SELECTION FOR FFY 2007

The current Order of Selection will continue through FFY2006 and FFY2007 allowing ORS to serve all eligible individuals under the current Order of Selection.

In addition, staffing changes, including retirements, promotions and vacancies reinforce the need for the current Order of Selection. All new clients with Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) are individuals with the “Most Significant” and “Significant” disabilities. These individuals require multiple services over an extended period. The Order of Selection consists of the following three categories:

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

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

The Code for Federal Regulations defines individual with the most significant disability in the following manner:

- An individual who has a severe physical or mental disability that seriously limits three or more functional capacities (mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of employment outcome, and

- Whose vocational rehabilitation is expected to require multiple VR services over an extended period of time, and
- Who has one or more physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, mental retardation , mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, musculoskeletal disorder, neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), paraplegia, quadriplegia, other spinal cord conditions, sickle cell anemia, specific learning disabilities, end-stage renal disease, or from another disability or combination of disabilities which, based on an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs, causes comparable substantial functional limitations.

ORS notifies all individuals assigned to Category Three of information and referral services to assist them with preparation for obtaining employment and related services. Individuals are reassessed when additional information relevant to OOS is received subsequent to a classification decision. Requests for post employment services are not subject to Order of Selection.

Projections for numbers to be served in FFY2007 are based on recent performance:

OOS Category 1: 2480

OOS Category 2: 620

ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c) (3)

GOALS AND PLANS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI, PART B, FUNDS FOR FFY 2007

Title VI, Part B provides \$300,000 of federal funding annually. These funds continue to be distributed through the fee-for-service basis with the emphasis on individually-planned services and outcome-based payments. Ninety-nine individuals received supported employment services through twenty-one supported employment vendors during FFY 2005. Throughout FFY 2006 and FFY 2007 there will be continued efforts to develop new supported employment vendors. Due to supported employment vendors' staff turnover, ongoing training and technical assistance have been necessary. The Community Rehabilitation Program Specialist, Regional Supervisors and counselors all participate in this training and technical assistance.

ATTACHMENT 4.12 (d)

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

2007

In FFY 2006, I & E funds were utilized for transition services for youth with disabilities, the Youth Leadership Forum and the State Rehabilitation Council activities.

TRANSITION SERVICES:

- I & E funds were used to provide a summer work experience to students from the RI School for the Deaf. This program, using a fee for service model, was so successful, that ORS is planning to provide a FFY06 summer work experience targeting additional students.
- As the students from Rhode Island School for the Deaf have an increased need for transition services, ORS is planning to focus on career exploration, career development and community-based work experiences for students within approximately two years of graduation. It is anticipated that for FFY 2007, ORS will collaborate with Rhode Island School for the Deaf in modifying the program to reflect the changing demographics and needs of the students.
- The cooperative Agreement between DHS/ORS and the Rhode Island Department of Education was renewed in SFY 2006 for another five years. During FFY 2006, I & E funds are being utilized to fund vocational assessment services provided by the Regional Vocational Assessment Centers at the Regional Educational Collaboratives for students with disabilities transitioning from high school to post secondary activities.
- In addition, during FFY 2006, I & E funds are being utilized to support the two regional Transition Academies established to provide vocational and academic services to students between the ages of

eighteen and twenty-one who have not yet completed their programs as described in their IEP, but do not wish to remain in a high school setting. A third Transition Academy will be opening in early FFY 2007, and ORS will expand its fee-for-services relationship to this new program.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP:

- ORS co-sponsors the annual Youth Leadership Forum which is intended to build leadership skills in youth with disabilities who are transitioning to adult life. Each participant completes a plan of action they anticipate following the conference. Alumni of the four-day forum return as counselors and trainers. ORS in collaboration with several community-based organizations is working to expand recruitment, with a goal of fifteen suitable candidates for a Youth Leadership Forum in the summer of FFY2006. Plans for FFY2007 include moving the forum time table to the spring vacation period.

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL:

- In FFY 2006, Innovation and Expansion (I & E) funds are being utilized to fund activities and projects of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).
- I&E funds in FFY 2007 will support orienting and training new members on the SRC and their work on developing projects and priorities for FFY 2007 and the five year plan. ORS provided training through Assumption College for designated SRC members.
- I & E funds are utilized to sponsor the Annual Employer Honor Roll that is organized as a collaborative effort by the SRC and ORS. These activities will be carried forth to FFY 2007 also with I & E funds.

OTHER INITIATIVES:

- During FFY 2006, I & E funds are being utilized to support training for Community Rehabilitation Program staff in the areas of situational assessments and job development. This training is being provided through the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities.
- I & E funds will be utilized in FFY 2007 for the Partnership to Employment Conference to help individuals with disabilities learn about employment options.
- Establishment funds are being developed to provide job coaching services through a contract with Goodwill Industries to enhance job placements and retention.

ATTACHMENT 4.12(d) (1)

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

In FFY 2007, ORS plans to address identified needs as listed in Attachment 4.12(a) in the following manner:

ACCESS ISSUES:

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment highlighted the need to continue addressing access and employment outcome issues with underserved and minority populations, specifically Temporary Aide for Needy Families (TANF), minority populations and individuals with sensory impairments.

FAMILY INDEPENDENCE INITIATIVES:

Individuals with learning disabilities who are in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program have traditionally been underserved. ORS developed the Family Independence Learning Disabilities Project, nationally recognized as a best practices program that assists individuals with Learning Disabilities to become economically self-sufficient. Due to the number of referrals and demonstrated need, the program is being expanded state-wide. In FFY 2006, ORS will work with the Department of Education to survey all adult education providers so that a profile of services and accommodations available at each adult education agency can be developed. ORS will continue to participate on the Welfare Reform Implementation Task Force Education Subcommittee to expand availability of services and expedite the identification of

adult learners with special needs and obstacles to economic independence. The number of learning disability testing providers has been expanded statewide thus providing increased choices for customers participating in the program. For FFY 2006 and FFY 2007, the ORS liaison to the project will continue to train DHS field staff on learning disabilities and the screening process using the *Bridges to Practice* model.

MINORITY POPULATIONS:

Attachment 4.12 (d)(2) addresses ORS efforts in outreaching to minority populations.

SENSORY IMPAIRMENT:

For FFY 2006 and FFY 2007, ORS will continue outreach efforts to individuals with visual and hearing impairments. Ensuring that potential customers are aware of the services available requires a focus on developing relationships with rehabilitation facilities, hospitals, pharmacies, college disability offices, college financial aid offices and allied health professionals. Coordinating transition activities with existing ORS school liaison counselors and educational representatives are expected to reinforce the referral system to ORS for all students with sensory impairments. In addition, the ORS Career Assessment Center continues to be a resource to assist customers in becoming more knowledgeable about computers, adaptive equipment and technology. Equipment is available for loan, through ORS or the equipment loan program Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) to customers of the agency. New computers allow customers to learn how to search for jobs on the Internet using screen enlargement software and voice recognition software including JAWS, develop resumes and or improve

skills. ORS is also pursuing Video Relay technology in order to communicate with Deaf customers in their preferred language and method of communication.

CONTACT WITH CUSTOMERS:

A result of the ORS/SRC Comprehensive Needs Assessment, a strategic planning task force group has been developed in FFY 2006 to examine the task demands of field staff and formulate recommendations so that timely response to and ongoing contact with customers is assured.

FEAR OF LOSING BENEFITS:

The loss of financial and medical benefits has been a major obstacle to customer's efforts to seek employment. Several developments have occurred in FFY 2006 that may effectively address these concerns. The enactment of the Medicaid Buy-In effective January 1, 2006 will contribute to customer confidence by allowing continued medical coverage during employment. In addition, ORS has emphasized the importance of incorporating Benefits Counseling as a critical element of informed choice pre- and post-employment. Information about the impact of employment income on customers' benefits is essential in order to make informed decisions. ORS identified, for example, that the Deaf and Hard of Hearing customers of our agency were underrepresented in the use of the benefits counseling service. Therefore, a task group was convened to identify methods of increasing access to this critical service. Since initiated, 40 Deaf and Hard of Hearing customers have participated in Benefits Counseling. In FFY 2006, ORS will re-apply for the Work Incentives Planning (formerly Benefits Planning, Advocacy, & Outreach - BPAO) Grant, a national competitive grant process, so that this critical service can be offered for an additional five years.

INDIVIDUALS' EXPECTATIONS:

Informed choice requires understanding one's skills, interests and barriers as well as learning about the changing job market. The individual, with assistance from the ORS counselor identifies the steps needed to reach the chosen career goal. The ORS Comprehensive Needs Assessment indicated that the process of informed choice, including the concept of a career ladder and knowledge of labor market information needed to be strengthened. Meetings with vendors who assist with assessment services are now being held on a regular basis and ORS liaisons are reinforcing the use of Labor Market Information (LMI), to clarify career ladders and provide information on new short term training options. Additionally, ORS convened a LMI training for ORS counselor training staff.

INFORMED CHOICE AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT:

During FFY 2006 and continuing into FFY2007, ORS continues to address informed choice in all aspects of our relationship with customers. At application, through intake and IPE development, and even at closure, customers are provided with information intended to assist in the decision-making process. Orientation Checklists, Fact Sheets, ongoing communication and decision-making guides are all incorporated into each aspect of customer service. These documents are developed and revised as appropriate and are included on the ORS website. These documents are also available in alternate formats and various languages.

The Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Specialist has developed new resources around the state so that customers have increased options to select an appropriate vendor within their geographic area. This expansion has included enhancing the provision of supported employment

services to individuals with significant disabilities and cultivating programs to improve training options to culturally diverse customers. The CRP Specialist has continued to develop the "Vendor Profile" as a guide for ORS customers to make informed decisions about service providers. The Agency's Fee Schedule has been revised so that it can function as a tool for person-centered planning and informed choices for customers.

The ORS Policy Review Team is reviewing all policies to ensure that informed choice is incorporated in all policies for FFY 2006. The efforts by ORS counselors and their supervisors to resolve issues as close to the counseling relationship as possible has had a positive impact on the number and frequency of mediation and hearing requests. Throughout FFY 2006 and continuing into FFY 2007, ORS will continue to educate customers to their options for resolution of any disputes and informed choice as a foundation to the rehabilitation process. New ORS staff will participate in trainings about informed choice and ethics. All personnel, on an ongoing basis, have access to supervisors and administrators for consultation on practices that assure customer rights within the ORS program.

LACK OF SKILLS TO COMPETE IN THE JOB MARKET:

ORS has increased the number of short-term training options for customers. In addition, a job try-out system enables customers to participate in an evaluation of a particular type of work at the actual work site. Job-seeking skills workshops are being conducted on a regular basis to increase customer competence in conducting a job search. The workshop includes: interviewing techniques, resume development, the importance of references, application completion and mock interviews. A new service, the Job Club, is being implemented beginning FFY2006 and will

reinforce and support customers in their job search. Besides efforts at increasing customer competence in preparing for and getting a job, ORS is also training staff in resume development and labor market information. For FFY 2007, ORS anticipates expanding interventions targeting customer skill development and competence in preparing for, getting and keeping jobs as customer needs and labor market trends dictate.

MARKETING PLAN:

In order to more effectively reach employers, parents and school personnel, referral sources and the general public, ORS will work in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), to develop a Marketing Task Group to critically examine all points of interaction with the community and assure that a consistent message of the mission of ORS is provided to all.

RELATIONSHIP WITH COLLEGES:

ORS has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the three public Institutions of Higher Education to ensure access to academic programs and services for ORS eligible students with disabilities. In FFY 2006, ORS has established a task force to focus on developing strategies to improve the coordination between ORS and the Financial Aid and Student Service Offices of the State's colleges and universities, as well as to develop more efficient ways to implement ORS training policies and procedures.

TRANSPORATATION OBSTACLES:

The ORS/SRC Comprehensive Needs Assessment identified transportation as one of the greatest unmet needs. Barriers include lack of access to any public transportation, lack of information

about available resources, attitudes and fears about traveling and need for expanded resources. Training for all ORS staff was provided on February 1, 2006 to maximize use of available resources and to begin to identify new strategies. A question and answer format was used, with three representatives from Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), a representative from an organization working with disadvantaged urban youth, and ORS staff. Better understanding of flex services and anticipated changes to improve Para-transit scheduling were two areas covered. New strategies to be implemented in FFY2006 and FFY2007 include increasing the number of travel training vendors and expanded use of travel training. A vanpool service from Connecticut which transports individuals to R.I. worksites will also be explored. Vendors providing transition assessment services will be encouraged to incorporate travel training in their service. The transportation planning fact sheet will be more widely used, and the need for transportation planning will be addressed in the IPE on an individual basis. Overcoming transportation barriers with new strategies will be a focus in FFY2007.

ATTACHMENT 4.12(d)(2)

**TO CARRY OUT OUTREACH ACTIVITIES TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE
INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES WHO ARE
MINORITIES FOR FFY 2007**

The following strategies will be continued or expanded to increase and serve minority customers of ORS. Every year since FFY 2002, ORS has met Standard 2 (Minority Ratio Equal Access to Services) of the VR Standards and Performance Indicators.

In FFY2006, ORS has sought to ensure that minorities have equal access to and knowledge about rehabilitation services. Outreach efforts have included establishing and enhancing our liaison relationships with several community based organizations who serve minority populations. ORS has a liaison relationship with such agencies as Dorcas Place, Genesis Center, International Institute, Urban League, Narragansett Tribal Health Center and the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Vocational Program. These outreach efforts have sought to increase awareness of services, to ensure equal access to the ORS program and to facilitate the referral process. By having a presence at community-based agencies, ORS has an opportunity to increase cultural competence, to meet with potential customers in an environment of familiarity, to include the referral source into the rehabilitation process as an additional support, and to help the customer develop a rehabilitation team. The rehabilitation team, in turn, has the potential to function as a support and resource to the customer in developing and implementing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Often the referring agency will continue to provide long term supports to the customer.

The Spanish community is the largest and fastest growing minority group in Rhode Island. In FFY2006 and continuing into FFY 2007, ORS provides two weekly orientation sessions, at different sites, for our customers who primarily speak Spanish. ORS has a dedicated Spanish phone line to assist customers who communicate in Spanish. All ORS documents are translated into Spanish to enable informed choice. Besides developing closer relationships with agencies that provide adult literacy and English as a Second Language, ORS utilizes a bilingual psychologist who can provide psychological and learning disability assessments. ORS has partnered with the Pawtucket netWORKri One-Stop Center to provide pre-employment workshops for Spanish-speaking customers.

ORS is a partner with the six netWORKri's One-Stops Centers in the state. Several of the netWORKri sites have Spanish and Portuguese speaking staff to serve the geographic areas with the highest concentration of minority population. In FFY2006, ORS has two bilingual staff and continues to advocate for additional bi-lingual staff. ORS staff have been trained in the use of the Language Line Interpreting Service and a "How To" instruction guide was provided to all regional staff. For FFY 2007, ORS will be examining the literacy level of our written documents to reflect the reading levels of current and potential customers.

ORS is striving to expand its training and service options to better support a commitment to minorities with disabilities. ORS vendors have been encouraged to increase their capacity to serve minority populations. An ORS provider, Goodwill Industries, has addressed this need by hiring case management and job development staff with bilingual capabilities. In FFY2006, we

contracted with a computer training facility that provides instruction in Spanish. In FFY 2007, ORS will continue to expand its capacity to serve non-English speaking customers.

The Cultural Diversity Cadre, which consists of representatives from each ORS region as well as several administrators, is assisting in the development and presentation of trainings on the impact of cultural issues on the rehabilitation process. This educational focus will build better understanding of and improved relationships with targeted ethnic/racial communities – thus leading to improved employment outcomes. The Cadre also monitors compliance with Standard Two which reviews access to services by minority populations. They meet quarterly and report to the administration. An ORS representative is on the Rhodes to Independence Task Group addressing cultural diversity issues. Additionally, an ORS representative is on a task group at DHS representing cultural diversity issues for customers, and on the Office of Minority Health Advisory Council through the Department of Health.

ORS staff meet regularly with the Narragansett Tribal Health Center through our South County regional staff and as a result, ORS providing services leading to successful outcomes. In addition, ORS is participating in a disability research project being conducting by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Program (MPTN-VR). The MPTN-VR has enlisted ORS to collaborate in a referral process while conducting disability research of the Narragansett Tribal Nation. In an effort to increase cultural competence and build capacity to provide services to Native Americans, the MPTN-VR is developing a one-day training conference that will be available to ORS rehabilitation counselors and staff. ORS has, in turn, sponsored a meeting of all ORS supervisors and the MPTN-VR staff to increase

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collaboration, provided office space to the Tribal VR Technician and attendance at regional ORS meetings to discuss referrals to and from Tribal VR and coordinate services available. The tribal VR Counselor is assisting ORS in forging a relationship with the RI Indian Council.

ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12 (d) (3)

**TO OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO
AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE
SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM FOR FFY 2007**

The updates in attachments 4.12 (a), 4.12 (c) (1), 4.12 (d), (d) (1), (d) (2) also address the efforts to overcome barriers so equitable access is assured. Barriers related to benefits planning, transportation, informed choice, cultural barriers, employment options, and options for individuals with sensory impairments have been previously addressed in other sections of the Annual Update to the State Plan.

ORS has continued to enlist an array of interpreter services to ensure customer access to our services in their preferred language and method. Through the Commission on The Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CDHH) and Allied Reporting services, we are able to access ASL interpreters or real time captioning for our clients and staff. We are in the process of obtaining four Video Relay stations that both staff and clients will be able to utilize as needed. In addition, we utilize language interpreters through various vendors so that customers have access to our services in their primary language. We have developed the capacity to use the AT language line as well so that we are better able to communicate with clients.

ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12(e)

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

The Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) has increased the number of successful outcomes annually. Seven hundred (700) individuals were closed successfully employed in FFY2005 while the goal for FFY2006 is seven hundred and ten (710) successful outcomes. All Federal Standards and Indicators have been met successfully since FFY2003 and it is expected they will continue to be met through FFY2007. Rhode Island is one of the limited states in the country who met all of the standards in FFY2005. The rehabilitation rate, the percentage of individuals who exited the program after receiving services who achieved an employment outcome, for FFY2005 was 64%, up from 56% in FFY2004. During FFY 2006, ORS continues to monitor the rehabilitation rate through caseload management days and clinical supervision. Additionally, counselors utilize the In-Rhodes System to check employment data, and continue to explore a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Labor and Training (DLT) wage information for tracking purposes.

School to Career activities with high school students, provides a seamless system for youth who transition to adult service providers. Dedicated personnel work collaboratively with Local Education Administrations (LEAs) in order to identify and refer students for transition services. In addition, ORS personnel assist high school and college students in benefiting from mentoring opportunities, summer work experiences, internships and the Youth Leadership Forum. A new pattern of services for Deaf students has been made possible through the utilization of I & E

funds. Students from Rhode Island School for the Deaf have been able to participate in summer work experiences and school year work preparation activities. In FFY 2007, RI School for the Deaf students will continue to have access to transition activities through summer work and work preparation services. In FFY 2006, I&E funds are being utilized for vocational assessment services which include career exploration, job shadowing, and community-based work experiences for approximately one hundred and eighty-five ORS eligible youth with disabilities at Regional Vocational Assessments Centers. In FFY 2006, two regional Transition Academies are providing services to twenty-two students aged 18-21 in order to prepare them to enter the adult world of work. A third Transition Academy will open in early FFY 2007, and ORS will expand our fee-for-services relationship to the new program.

Supported employment will continue to provide a valuable service available through a fee for service and outcome based model with 21 vendors around the state. ORS works with both the Division of Developmental Disabilities and Division of Behavioral Health Services Advisory Councils to examine best practices, explore employment strategies, and track outcomes. A "Vendor Profile" has been developed by ORS that summarizes information about each vendor as well as outcome statistics. This vendor profile will be used as a resource for customers' informed choice. I & E funds have been and will continue to be used to train staff of the Community Rehabilitation vendors through ORS contracts with the Paul V. Sherlock Center at RI College. Additionally, several ORS staff are assisting MHRH through their involvement in focus groups designed to develop a strategic plan for that agency and customers needing supported employment services.

Development of new vendors to address transportation and training needs will continue to be a focus for ORS. Transportation presents a significant obstacle to employment. Staff training and cultivating additional transportation training vendors is being enlisted to address this issue. In terms of training, ORS is increasing the number of short-term training options available so that customers have more training options. Changing labor market trends have also influenced the need to cultivate additional options. On-the-Job Training and Work Try Out will continue to be valuable resources available to ORS customers.

The relationship between ORS and employers is being expanded by involving employers in ORS interview training classes, participation in annual Business Expo and Chamber of Commerce, involving employers in mentoring day, and continued presence at job fairs through the netWORKri system. Discussions have been initiated between ORS and Rhodes to Independence about collaborating with the State Rehabilitation Council on a marketing plan for the agency. ORS is also in the process of developing a Business Advisory Council consisting of an array of business leaders.

Benefits Counseling or Work Incentive Counseling has been well integrated into the service spectrum of ORS. The service is now incorporated into employment plans and is provided early in the rehabilitation process and after employment is procured. ORS plans to participate in a competitive grant application in order to continue this critical service.

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The State Rehabilitation Council has utilized I & E funds to support its work. Additionally the SRC has a team of dedicated staff who volunteer their time and expertise guiding the path to new methods of service delivery.

In FFY 2006, I & E funds were used to sponsor the Annual Employer Honor Roll, planned collaboratively by ORS and the State Rehabilitation Council. This annual event acknowledges employers for their contribution to successful employment and advancement of individuals with disabilities towards independence and economic self-sufficiency.

ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 7.3

**QUALITY, SCOPE AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR
FFY 2007**

Supported employment continues to be an important option for individuals with the most significant disabilities. In FFY 2005, ninety-four (94) individuals utilizing supported employment services achieved successful competitive employment. In FFY 2006, initial numbers indicate an upward trend in customers served and the number of successful outcomes.

The Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Specialist and assigned ORS staff continue to be active partners in both Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Supported Employment Advisory Councils. The Councils focus on exploring employment strategies and methods of tracking outcomes, which will lead to quality employment while focusing on the needs of individuals with mental illness and those with developmental disabilities. In FFY 2006 and FFY 2007 there will be increased efforts to share and utilize best practices from each of the vendors on the councils. In addition, expert speakers will be invited to discuss topics of shared interest, Work Incentives, Ticket-to-Work and Disability Business Enterprise. In FFY 2006, the CRP Specialist will unveil a new Vendor Profile Report. This report will list identifying information on each vendor; as well as what services they provide, the number of customers served, and the number of successful outcomes. This report will also be distributed to customers, ORS Counselors and vendors. This Vendor Profile will increase the customer's ability to make informed choices by making vendor information readily available.

During FFY 2007, ORS will explore funding sources in order to expand access to supported employment services. Natural supports are encouraged whenever possible. The Cooperative Agreement between the Department of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals (MHRH) and DHS/Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) describes the commitment of the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Division of Behavioral Health Services to provide funding for Supported Employment services.

Transition To Extended Services

The ORS Supported Employment Services program provides competitive employment opportunities in an integrated setting for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The array of services that are required to obtain and sustain employment is based on a determination of the individuals' needs and specified in the IPE. Supported employment is a place/train model which includes training by job coaches at the work site in most cases. The job coaching, generally provided by the long term support CRP is gradually reduced, depending on the individual needs, to a maintenance level.

As ORS involvement is generally time-limited, engaging a provider for extended long term services is addressed when the IPE is developed. The CRP responsible for providing long term supports signs an agreement to continue providing extended services so that the individual has a seamless transition to from ORS to the long term support provider.

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The time frame for transitioning an individual from the support services provided by both ORS and a CRP to extended supports provided solely by the CRP varies based on the individualized needs of each customer. The transition to the extended services generally occurs when the individual is closed with ORS. Establishing a long term support CRP early in the process ensures a smooth transition to extended services. The on-going support services can be provided by a state agency, a private non-profit organization or any other appropriate resource.

Assurances

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Applicants must review the requirements for certification regarding lobbying included in the regulations cited below before completing this form. Applicants must sign this form to comply with the certification requirements under 34 CFR Part 82, "New Restrictions on Lobbying." This certification is a material representation of fact upon which the Department of Education relies when it makes a grant or enters into a cooperative agreement.

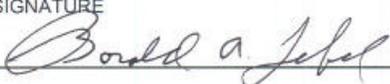
As required by Section 1352, Title 31 of the U.S. Code, and implemented at 34 CFR Part 82, for persons entering into a Federal contract, grant or cooperative agreement over \$100,000, as defined at 34 CFR Part 82, Sections 82.105 and 82.110, the applicant certifies that:

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

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

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

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

NAME OF APPLICANT Rhode Island Department of Human Services Office of Rehabilitation Services	PR/AWARD NUMBER AND / OR PROJECT NAME Supported Employment Services Program H187A060059
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE Ronald A. Lebel, Director	
SIGNATURE 	DATE June 23, 2006

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

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

NAME OF APPLICANT Rhode Island Department of Human Services Office of Rehabilitation Services	PR/AWARD NUMBER AND / OR PROJECT NAME Vocational Rehabilitation - Basic Support H126A060058
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE Ronald A. Lebel, Director	
SIGNATURE 	DATE June 23, 2006