

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

2011 Annual Report

Lincoln D. Chaffee
Governor

Sandra M. Powell
DHS 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.

Message from the Director

It is my pleasure to provide you with the Annual Report for Federal Fiscal Year 2011 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 economic self-sufficiency, as well as employment, 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 2011 7,529 persons with disabilities were provided vocational rehabilitation, training and employment services. The Disability Determination Services successfully cleared 19,316 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.

Sandra M. Powell

January 2012

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Message from the Administrator

On behalf of the Office of Rehabilitation Services, I am pleased to present to you the 2011 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.



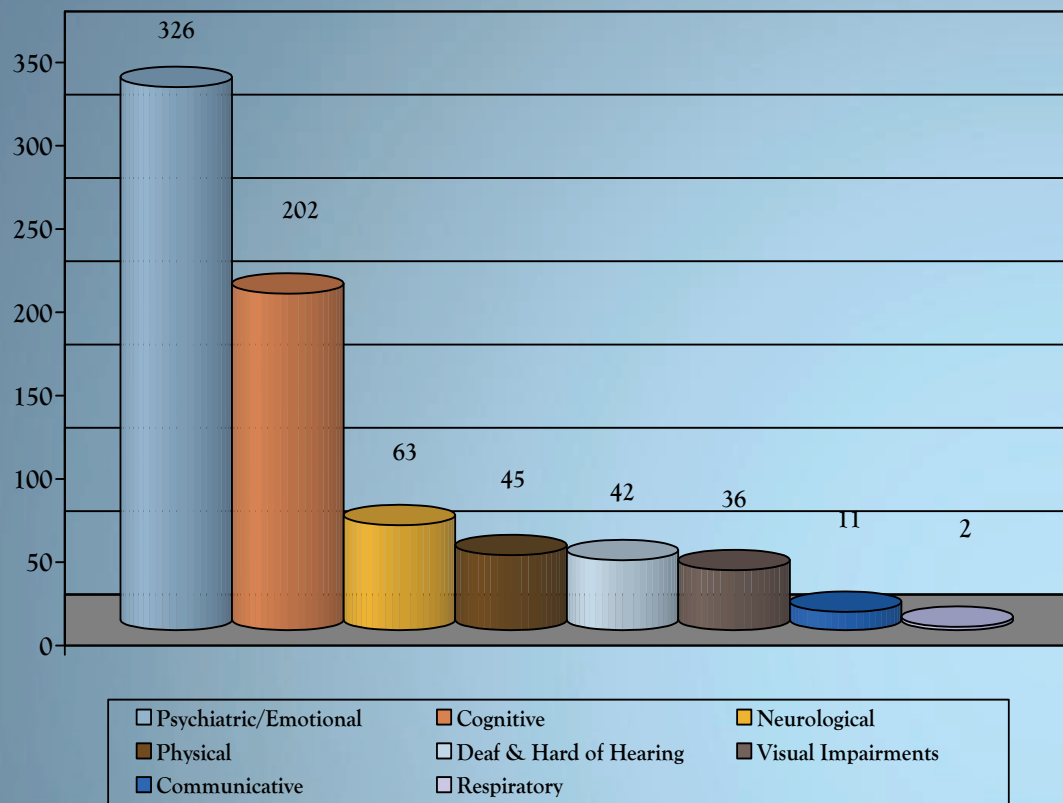
The Vocational Rehabilitation Program increases revenue at all levels of government and decreases the burden of income maintenance programs. As persons with disabilities achieve an employment outcome, they become tax-paying citizens and more than pay back the cost of the program.

In 2011, ORS assisted 727 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.

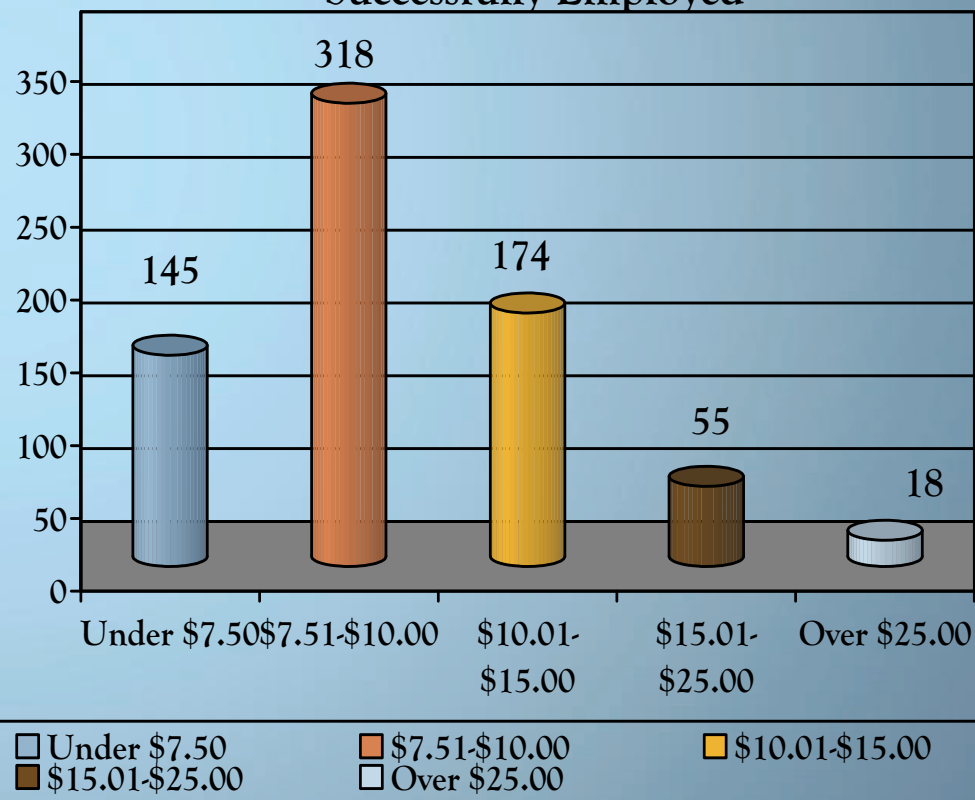
We are also indebted to the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council, Statewide Independent Living Council, Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind & Visually Impaired, State Committee of Blind Vendors, and Rhode Island Council on Assistive Technology for their partnership and help in maximizing the 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

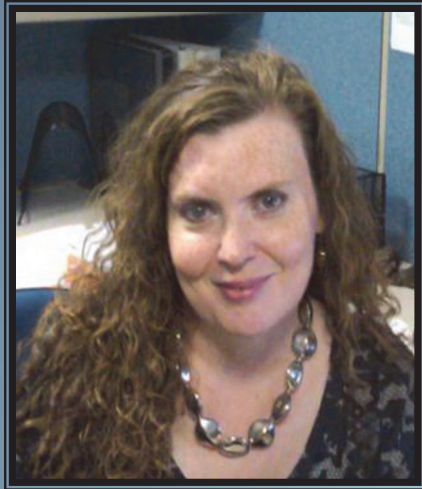
Primary Disability of 727 Persons Successfully Employed



Hourly Wage of 727 Persons Successfully Employed*



Message from the State Rehabilitation Council Chair



The Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council is proud to share with you the 2011 Annual Report. 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 727 Rhode Islanders with disabilities to secure employment in 2011. 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. 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 pro-active 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.

*2011 SRC
Annual Meeting
May 17, 2011*

*Front Row: M. Hazard, J. Giroux, M. Hoyer, W. Clemons
Row 2: K. Grygiel, J. Drew, J. Fino, C. Sansonetti, C. Cote, Liz Graves, M. Dorsinville-Phanor, J. Belasco, A. Leclerc, W. Truelove, M. Wambach, A. Maria, K. Wennermark
Rear: S. Brunero, J. Troncoso, R. Bruno, N. Baker, J. Machado, L. Massemينو, R. Racine, L. Diorio, L. Deschenes, S. Lupovitz*



**State Rehabilitation Council
Members**

Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett: **Chair**
Dr. Judith Drew: **Vice-chair**
Catherine Sansonetti, Esq: **Secretary**

- Cory Allard
- Janice Belasco
- Rocco Bruno
- Thomas (Wheeler) Clemons
- Kelley Conti
- Cynthia M. Cote
- Mona Dorsinville-Phanor
- Joan Fino
- Dorothy Furlong
- Jeanne M. Giroux
- Paul Harden
- Michael Hazard
- Margaret Hoyer
- Roger Ianetta
- Anne LeClerc
- Sanford Lupovitz
- Jeffrey Machado
- Aracelis Maria
- Lucille Massemينو
- Doreen McConaghyis
- Daniel Pieroni
- Vincent Rossi
- Jane Slade
- Juan Troncoso
- Willa Truelove
- Mary Wambach
- Herb Weiss
- Kim Wennermark

February 2012

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Vocational Rehabilitation Program Highlights

727 individuals were successfully employed

- 2,297 individuals applied for vocational rehabilitation services.
- 7,529 individuals with disabilities were provided vocational rehabilitation services.
- 1,478 individuals worked with a vocational rehabilitation counselor to develop a new Individualized Plan for Employment [IPE].
- 4,702 individuals received Counseling and Guidance Services from vocational rehabilitation counselors.
- 2,827 individuals received services purchased from vendors. Services ranged from evaluations, medical and psychological therapies, training, personal assistant services, job placement and training.
- 252 individuals received rehabilitation technology services to assist them to prepare for and to enter employment.
- 3,343 individuals received information from Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) Resource Centers about assistive technology and funding options.
- 3,338 individuals received AT training, demonstration, loans or assistance with recycled AT devices.
- 334 individuals were provided specialized equipment through the ATEL (Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan) Program.
- 1,906 youth with disabilities ages 14-24 have been provided transition services by 18 VR counselors.

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 their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor work together to develop an Employment Plan which will assist that individual to reach their 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
- ◆ Rehabilitation Technology Services
- ◆ Diagnostic Evaluations
- ◆ Job Development and Placement Services
- ◆ Housing Modifications
- ◆ Other Goods and Services
- ◆ Transition Services from School to Career
- ◆ Assistive Technology Services
- ◆ College or Vocational Training
- ◆ Vehicle Modifications
- ◆ Post-Employment Services
- ◆ Job Training and Job Supports



Claude's Story

Claude came to ORS as a student. He was involved with the culinary arts program in his high school and had done well.

Upon completion of high school, he began a food service training program with People in Partnerships. The Office of Rehabilitation Services provided the necessary funding for this short-term training program. Claude was also assisted with benefits counseling through ORS once training was completed. Claude met with Jeanne Faye, Benefits Specialist, who helped him understand how working would impact his benefits.

Claude was referred then to the Division of Developmental Disability where he obtained funding for long-term supports in order to maintain employment. Once long term supports were available, Claude began working with Work Opportunities Unlimited to obtain employment.

Claude obtained and maintains employment today as a Food Service Associate at the Newport Naval Base where he currently works 40 hours per week.

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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 2011, the nationally-recognized LD Project served 212 individuals and assisted 80 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.

Harry's Story



Harry was referred to ORS as a 16-year old high school student in the life skills program, where he received many supports including academic, social skills, and speech/language. His mother is a strong advocate for Harry and has high expectations.

Harry has some significant barriers to employment but has always aimed high and maintained his sense of humor. His initial job goal was to be a soccer coach or in food service, because he liked sports and food. The purpose of ORS transition services was to give Harry exposure to work experiences, identify the level of support necessary for him to maintain

a job, and start to develop good work behaviors and skills. After meeting with his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Meredith Wright, Harry participated in a vocational evaluation, situational assessment, summer work, and summer camps with Looking Upwards with varying degrees of success. It was discovered early on that Harry needed a job coach to keep motivated, remain on task, and do a thorough job. Harry is very sociable but not always at the right times. Initially, Harry's stamina was low, and he was only able to work for half an hour before needing a break. When performing non-preferred tasks, he had a tendency to stop working or get distracted.

At Harry's IEP meeting at the end of 2010, the team agreed that Harry had peaked academically and that he should concentrate on learning vocational and independent living skills. The school district agreed to fund Harry's participation in the James L. Maher transition program until he turned 21. Harry receives SSI benefits, and it was anticipated that he would then receive DDD funding for adult services. In March 2011 the team met again. At that time Maher Center staff reported that Harry had been trying out different

jobs and his maturity had increased. However, he needed a job coach, prompting, tasks broken down into smaller steps, and schedule consistency.

The Maher Center staff did not anticipate that Harry would be able to work competitively at minimum wage in an integrated worksite in the near future.

As Harry currently prepares to turn 21 years of age and move into DDD-funded adult services, he has also moved from the Maher Center workshop to his new position as a Custodian of the Surface Warfare Officer's School at the Naval Station in Newport. Harry is very proud to wear the Base uniform and display his identification card and security clearance badge (which also serves as a great motivator for him). He works with a job coach in a small custodian crew on 3-hour shifts every day and earns significantly above minimum wage.

Harry's most recent Maher Center progress report states that his work performance has improved. When asked what he has learned from his job, Harry responded "to do a job properly the first time because I do not like to have to go back to redo it a second time". As a fine and upstanding working member of his community, Harry now contributes some of his earnings to household expenses, gives his church weekly donations, and enjoys buying his mother gifts.

April 2012

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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.

Rose's Story



Rose is an individual who is passionate about her work, as well as issues involving people who have disabilities. At one time, both these passions came together to prompt Rose to act.

Rose was an employee at a local RI bank. She had been there four years, had done a good job, and received excellent reviews. A new manager did not understand hearing loss in the work place, which made Rose extremely uncomfortable to the point of leaving her job.

Rose was referred to the Office of Rehabilitation Services and met with Paula Cardi Berard, a VR Counselor who works with people who have Hearing Loss or who are Deaf.

She met with Rose to offer Vocational Guidance and Counseling, Information and Referral services, as well as to guide her through the process to obtain employment.

Rose’s hearing was first evaluated and she was fitted for and received new hearing aids. According to Rose, she heard the leaves rustle for the first time and the microwave ring, sounds she never knew existed. She also found she could communicate with her husband and children more easily. Once her hearing was no longer a barrier to employment, Job Development and Placement services were identified as appropriate VR services. Rose and her VR counselor identified the field of banking as a continued, realistic vocational interest. Rose was still interested in the customer service aspects, but also had interests in mortgage and loans. She likes “working with money” and is good with it. Rose was introduced to Mike Powers, a job developer who works with ORS clients. She also worked with an audiologist who is a medical consultant with the ORS. As well as fitting Rose with hearing aids, he was able to identify accommodations in the work place, which included both equipment and environmental supports.

May 2012

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Rose and Mike worked together to secure employment. Part of preparing for employment was learning to participate in interviews. Rose was able to make an informed decision in how she wanted to approach an employer about her hearing loss. Jobs were identified, and she went on interviews.

Rose is now employed as a bank teller with Washington Trust Bank. Her job functions include customer service, ordering cash, monetary deposits, and readying cash for shipment. At the time of this writing, Rose is starting a class to train for Head Teller; she is already considering possible promotions and career moves. She states that “banking is a part my life” and comes as “second nature” to her.

Through regular checks and adjustments to her hearing aids, Rose is able to continue to perform all aspects of her job. The Office of Rehabilitation Services assisted Rose in finding a job and identifying supports in her work place, allowing her to continue in a job which she loves. Her co-workers have been very helpful to her and she is beginning to consider them part of her “family”. A very important part of Rose’s identity has been restored.

Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired (SBVI) Program Highlights

- 16 vending facilities were supported by the Business Enterprises Program (BEP) at Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. BEP gross sales totaled \$1,667,137. FFY 2011 sales increased by 10.4%.
- 28,542 children screened by Vision Screening Program. 642 received eyeglasses.
- 248 children (68 birth - 3) received services from the Social Services unit.
- 45 children attended Camp Mauchatea.
- 746 elder individuals who are blind or visually impaired received services from IL for Older Blind Programs - 431 low vision aids, 195 rehab teaching, 126 mobility services, 565 service coordination.
- 98.6% of this group reported that they feel more confident in their independent living, and 19% indicated they had considered nursing home placement prior to services, but were able to remain in their own homes.

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 16 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".

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. **Nine** individuals were registered this past year. Individuals can access more than 200 newspapers and magazines, including Providence Journal, New York Times, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and the AARP Monthly Newsletter.

June 2012



Camp Mauchatea

2011

"Mauchatea" means "Be My Guide" in the Narragansett language, and in the eight years of its existence as an extended overnight camping and adventure, Camp Mauchatea has helped to guide Rhode Island's blind and visually impaired on the journey to adulthood.

All Rhode Islanders aged 6 to 17 who are legally blind are welcome at Camp Mauchatea at no cost, to include those with multiple disabilities. Camp Mauchatea is held at the Conference Center at Camp Canonicus in Exeter, Rhode Island.

Camper/staff ratio is 2:1, and under the able leadership of Camp Director Linda Hughes, Camp Mauchatea's highly-qualified staff has experienced a low turnover from year-to-year. Two of the junior staff, in fact, are pursuing careers as teachers of the blind as a direct result of their Camp experience.

Information from RI Lion Sight Foundation Inc.
<http://www.lions4sight.org/camp.htm>

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Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired (cont.)

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.

Don's Story

"In His Own Words"



"As we all know, losing ones eyesight is a very traumatic experience. When it happened to me, I was devastated. It was a tremendous blow. "How could I function? How would I ever be able to get along?" These thoughts raced through my mind as I imagine it has done to so many others. While so many mourned the idea that no longer could they read, drive a car or do the household chores; I felt that, but also what through me into a panic was the feeling that I would never be able to write again. I am an author and lecturer. This is how I defined myself.

For many years I have been writing local history. I write for the Warwick Beacon and have not missed a deadline since 1986. I have been writing a number of columns for other papers and magazines and have published over a dozen books. The thought of not being able to sit down at my computer, doing research and interviewing interesting people was difficult to imagine. This was in 2010 and at that time I was writing eight columns a month and was thinking I would not be a contributing member of society because of my blindness.

July 2012

Deep inside, I knew this was not true and that many people with less sight than I had were able to not only function but to produce. What I needed, however, was encouragement and this I am happy to say I received from a number of state agencies. My wife has had macular degeneration for a number of years, so I was acquainted with Insight and some of the other programs as well as some of the tools available to help with reading and doing household chores.

Thanks to a number of caring people I found that there were other tools available and that my career was not necessarily over. I was told about a computer program called ZoomText that could be of great help. Fortunately, the R.I. Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired provided tremendous help in this area. I must say that

I was unaware of the amount of help that I was about to receive. Their agency made it possible for me to not only get the ZoomText program, but also to get some excellent tutoring as well as a tape recorder and other aids. Of extreme importance was encouragement I received and the very high quality of care that Kerri Sorensen, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Melanie Sbardella, Supervisor, and others that I came in contact with had provided. As much as the physical aids, the moral support was of prime importance.

Once Kerri found that I wanted to continue my writing, she did everything possible to help me. Thanks to ORS, I have continued to write. I now have eleven columns and contribute to the Warwick City Historian Web site, and I am working on another novel. Naturally, working with a handicap is not easy and I do have some difficulties. Thanks, however, to my son Will D'Amato and my daughter, Terry Spencer, who provide chauffeuring services, and get me over the rough spots. I am able to use what I have to keep producing.

My thanks goes out to the R.I. Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and to Melanie and the excellent staff, for such help and encouragement.”

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Disability Determination Services

Program Highlights

18,223	Total cases were received by the DDS
19,316	Claims were successfully cleared by DDS
11,191	Initial claims were filed
1,391	Continuing Disability Review cases completed
225	Pre-Hearing Cases processed, resulting in 197 Disability Hearing Unit decisions
7,978	Cases with Consultative Examinations purchased
15,408	cases with Medical Evidence of Record received
\$2,064,742.00*	Total Medical Costs with a Total Budget of \$8,708,808*
\$448.40*	Cost Per Case.

PPWY efficiency rate was **398.8**. The national rate was **295.7**.

The performance accuracy rate for RI was **95.9%**.

The net accuracy was **97.0%**. Regulatory standard is **90.4%**.

*Based on the Monthly Obligation Report for 9/2011.

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.

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 began 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 2011 the RI DDS processed over 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.

August 2012

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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

Gary's Story

In December 2007 Gary was referred to ORS as a junior high school student with no work experience. His functioning and adaptive behavior skills met the criteria to have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) at school. Gary participated in a self-contained life skills class and he received support services for academic and social skills. He was a quiet shy young man, content to depend on others for direction, and someone who did not interact with peers often. Initially, it was difficult for Gary's VR Counselor, Meredith Wright, to get a verbal response from Gary as his preferred method of communication was to use gestures. Gary completed a number of ORS funded career exploration activities including a vocational evaluation, summer work programs, and situational assessments. It was discovered that Gary tended not to initiate tasks or independently move to the next step of a task. He required staff prompts and repeated demonstration to learn multiple steps and to complete tasks. However, once a steady routine was established, Gary began to demonstrate independent and consistent work skills and a good employment potential. Gary presented as easy going, which can be considered good worker traits, but resulted in difficulty pinpointing a clear vocational goal and direction. Communication with supervisors and self-advocacy were also identified as significant barriers to employment.



In 2009, Gary attended the East Bay Transition Academy based at Roger Williams University. The extent to how much Gary blossomed in this program was extraordinary. Travel training and a RIPTA bus pass enabled Gary to be able to travel on familiar bus routes across the state independently. Additionally, he was the first student to travel by water taxi to his summer worksite at the Fort Adams snack bar. He excelled at hands-on work and became a group leader at several worksites, able to teach his peers the steps of the tasks he himself had recently learned. When Gary expressed an interest in pursuing employment in food service and working on campus at The Commons, ORS and the Transition Academy staff supported him. He completed an application, interviewed and secured employment as a dishwasher. Gary also developed a strong work ethic, confidence and exceptional interpersonal skills not only with his peers, but with co-workers, staff and visitors. Who would have predicted that Gary would provide tours of the Roger Williams campus to potential incoming Transition Academy students and their parents a few years ago?

Gary graduated from the Transition Academy in June 2011 and has since completed The Cookie Place Culinary Arts Certificate Program. He continues to work at The Commons as a dishwasher and has secured additional shifts, receiving only occasional off-site supports. In the near future, he intends to self-advocate for himself and request the opportunity to move to food preparation/line cook duties at The Commons, which is his ultimate vocational goal. Gary has made and retained friends at the Transition Academy, and he has a girlfriend. Some things have not changed, as he seems to still prefer to communicate with gestures - he now greets his ORS counselor with a big hug... and then he chats effortlessly about how good he is doing in his job.

Gina's Story



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Gina applied for services from the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) in August 2010 when she was 49 years old. Upon the initial intake, Gina stated she has a history of making poor decisions but expressed a desire to work. Some of Gina's barriers included making inappropriate comments at times. Gina's goal was to work with the public on a part time basis. Gina expressed a desire to overcome her disabilities and become employed. A vocational evaluation was completed to obtain a better idea as to what abilities and interests she has to help with success on the job.

At the time of her application, she was volunteering at the Blue Mitten which is a non-profit agency. She was very happy there but was unable to become a paid employee.

The Office of Rehabilitation Services worked with her and her employer to provide on-the-job training so she could become a permanent part-time employee. ORS also provided job placement services and benefits planning.

Gina remains successfully employed and is happy with her job and the fact that she has worked hard to overcome her barriers.

State Rehabilitation Council Committee Reports

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 Employment. 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 with the ultimate goals of increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Based on discussions within the SRC Employment Committee and the SRC Executive Committee, the role of the Employment Committee was defined as primarily that of supporting SRC projects rather than launching projects of its own.

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 State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee serves as a guide for the Office of Rehabilitation Services. As in prior years, the SRC provided annual feedback and public testimony regarding the draft State Plan. The Committee reviews feedback from the SRC members and provides an overview of positive outcomes and suggested areas for improvement.

In 2011, the Committee expressed concern about ORS vacancies, and we support the filling of additional positions especially given that they are 80% federally funded. We were concerned with the excessively high caseload for counselors and believe it may impact negatively on services to clients. We also believe ORS efforts at training new counselors is very important especially given that almost 40% of the counselors at ORS are relatively new. In addition, the Committee was pleased to participate in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment and evaluate areas of customer and provider needs.

In 2011, the agency provided this committee with proposed changes to only one policy - Post-Secondary training. This policy is under review by the committee and will be submitted shortly.

This year, 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.

Nominating and Leadership

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 ever mindful of the Mission of the State Rehabilitation Council and we seek to recruit qualified individuals to support that Mission. In the recruitment process, our Committee was successful in adding new membership to the Council that we feel will not only meet our Federal requirements but enrich the partnership with the Office of Rehabilitation Services to better help their consumers. To that end we submitted to the Governor for appointment, seven new members and seven re-appointments representing a broad range of individuals from the Rhode Island community.

October 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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28	29	30	31	National Disability Awareness Month		

The Leadership Guest Speakers Program continued throughout 2011 providing support towards meeting ORS' goals and training for the Council membership. This year we were honored to have the State's Director of the Department of Human Services, Sandra Powell, and the Deputy Director, Corinne Russo, both attend meetings. The events gave them a better understanding of the Council's work and gave the Council membership positive reinforcement and support from these leaders.

Our other guest speakers programs included presentations on Sensory Impairment, Workforce Development, and the Assistive Technology Access Partnership. It is our goal that the Leadership Component of the Committee continues to provide these valuable enhancements to help the Council carrying out its duties and obligations in support of the Mission of the Office of Rehabilitation Services.

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.

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.

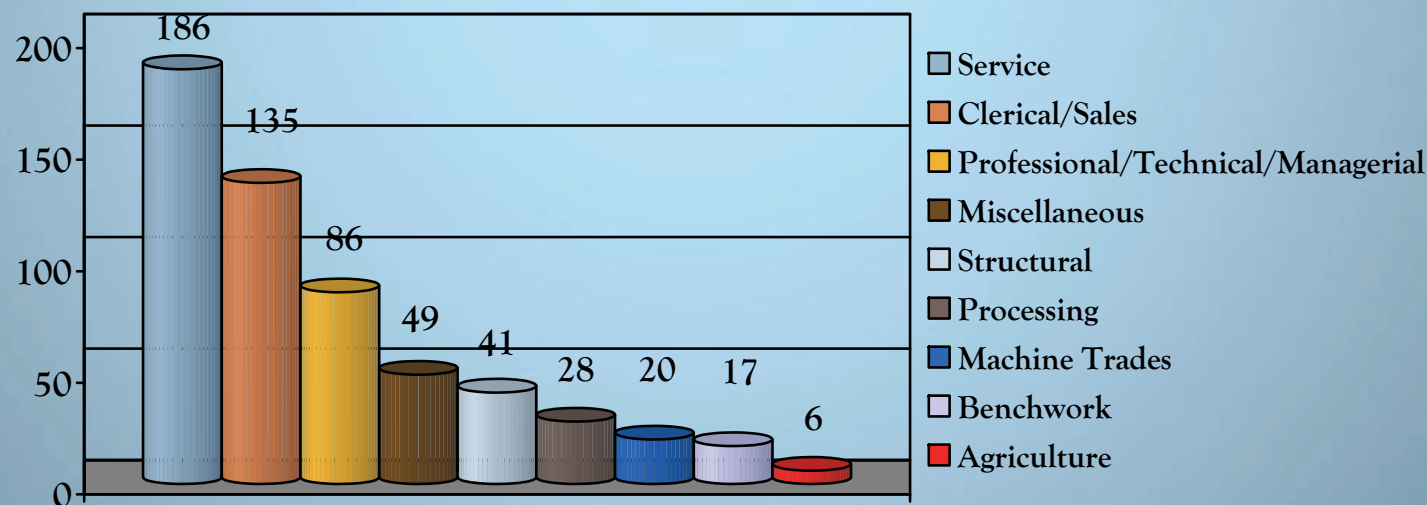
The Committee met in February of 2011, then again in November, with the focus now on collaboration with the Coalition for Transportation Choices. They represent a wide range of constituencies and will give the Committee a broader base for legislative and lobbying agendas to assist in creating opportunities for better and more cost effective transportation for people with disabilities.

Given the current economic climate in RI and the severe cuts to the human service programs, individuals with disabilities voices are being heard.

For the coming year, the Committee has a new goal; to merge with As of the November meeting, the Transportation Committee has merged with the Employment Committee to refocus their agenda as one of consumer access to employment and services as the model to push more transformation in the system.

A new mission statement is being created that will incorporate this new agenda.

**Primary Occupation of 727
Persons Successfully Employed**



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.

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Standards and Performance Indicators as of 9/30/11

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

FY 2006	36 greater	FY 2009	6 greater
FY 2007	9 greater	FY 2010	188 less
FY 2008	5 greater	FY 2011	159 greater

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 2006	59.79%	FY 2009	62.79%
FY 2007	59.89%	FY 2010	40.72%
FY 2008	62.81%	FY 2011	60.18%

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 2006	92.80%	FY 2009	96.30%
FY 2007	92.62%	FY 2010	97.89%
FY 2008	95.73%	FY 2011	97.52%

Indicator 1.4 - Competitively Employed (minimum wage or higher) who have a Significant Disability (Federal Standard 62.40%)

FY 2006	100.00%	FY 2009	100.00%
FY 2007	100.00%	FY 2010	100.00%
FY 2008	100.00%	FY 2011	98.31%

Indicator 1.5 - Earnings Ratio of Minimum Wage or higher for ORS vs. State Average (Federal Standard Ratio of .52)

FY 2006	.532	FY 2009	.510
FY 2007	.530	FY 2010	.540
FY 2008	.520	FY 2011	.500

Indicator 1.6 - Self-Support (report own income at closure vs. own income at application) (Federal Standard 53% mathematical difference)

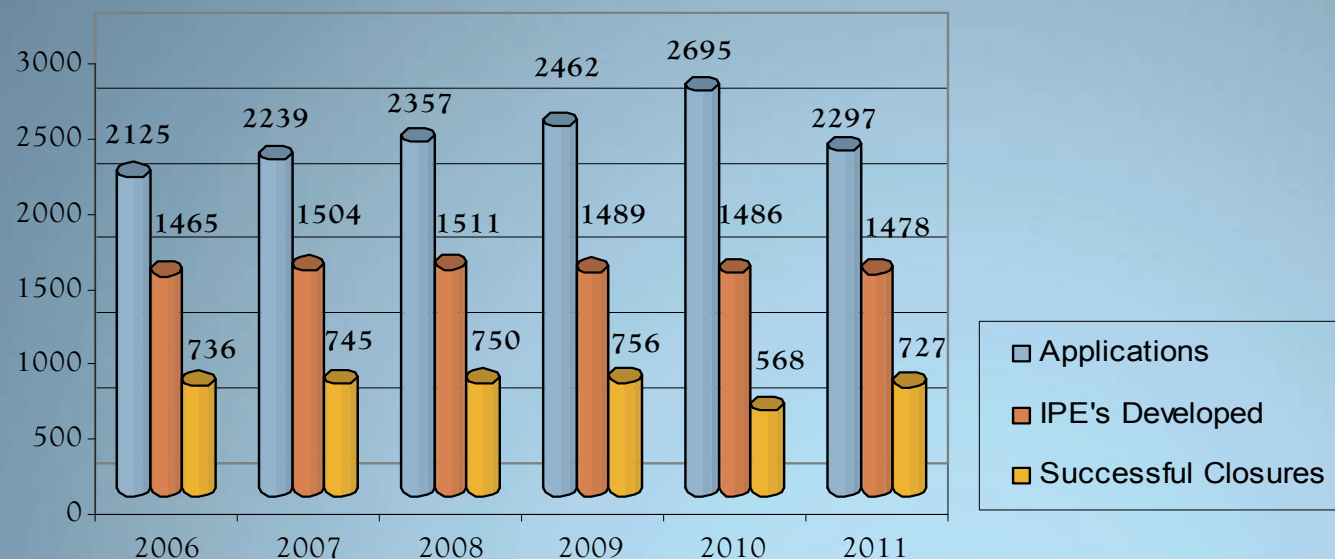
FY 2006	63.15%	FY 2009	55.40%
FY 2007	64.78%	FY 2010	62.95%
FY 2008	54.43%	FY 2011	67.28%

Standard 2 - Minority Ratio Equal Access to Services

(Federal Standard Rate of .80 for n=100+)

FY 2006	.927	FY 2009	.847
FY 2007	.854	FY 2010	.890
FY 2008	.884	FY 2011	.910

2006 - 2011 Statistical Comparison



Vocational Rehabilitation Leadership Team

Stephen Brunero
Administrator

Kathleen Grygiel
Deputy Administrator, VR

Roberta Greene Whittemore
Assistant Administrator/ATAP Program
Director/WIPA Supervisor

Ronald Racine
Deputy Administrator, SBVI

Laurie DiOrio
Assistant Administrator, SBVI

Linda Deschenes
Strategic Planning Unit

Monica Dzialo
Workforce Development

Jennifer Fiske
Training Grant Coordinator

Ryan Maturi
Office Manager

JoAnn Nannig
RI Works Coordinator/Transition

Mario Olivieri
Supervising Accountant

Jan Verrechia
Community Rehabilitation Program

December 2012

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For further information about this policy, contact:
the Community Relations Liaison Office, 401.462.2130
or TDD (hearing impaired) 401.462.6239.

**Rhode Island Department of Human Services
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40 Fountain Street - Providence, RI 02903
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*“Helping individuals with disabilities to
choose, find and keep employment”*

Available in alternate formats by
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