

DRAFT STATE PLAN AMENDMENT

EFFECTIVE DATES JANUARY 1, 2010 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2010

4.2(c) Summary of Input and Activities

Cooperation and Coordination with the State Rehabilitation Council

Input from the DVR and DBVI SRCs regarding the proposed integration of the two divisions

DBVI SRC Input

On October 14, 2009 the State of Vermont announced plans to integrate DVR and DBVI. On October 22, 2009 Joan Senecal, the Commissioner of the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAAIL), Diane Dalmasse, Director of DVR and Fred Jones, Director of DBVI met with the DBVI SRC to discuss the proposed integration of the two divisions. Also in attendance were many current and previous DBVI consumers who expressed their concerns about the change, asked questions, and shared their appreciation of DBVI services.

There have been many calls and emails to the Governor's office stating strong opposition to the loss of DBVI's status as a Designated State Agency as recognized in the Rehabilitation Act. The following is a summary of the input from the October 22nd SRC meeting:

- A major concern was that a merger and loss of the Designated State Agency status would result in a dilution of services for people who are blind or visually impaired. SRC members stated that, historical experience indicates that over time, the services for people who are blind and visually impaired will be eroded. Several people shared such experiences from other states and pointed out the high quality services they received from DBVI in Vermont.
- SRC members were concerned that the proportion of state/federal funds assigned to DBVI (historically 12% of the federal award) would be reduced. As a result, the amount of funds available for services for people who are blind and visually impaired would be reduced. They also did not feel that a Memorandum of Understanding was a secure way to preserve these agreements because of future changes in leadership and personnel.
- An example was offered by referencing a letter from the DBVI SRC in 2003 and a meeting with the Secretary of the Agency of Human Services at that time. The letter requested the opportunity for input whenever any changes to the status of DBVI as a Designated State Agency were being considered. A meeting was held and a commitment from the AHS Secretary was made, however, this current merger is not consistent with that agreement.

- SRC members were unhappy that they had not been consulted about the merger before it was announced.
- SRC members were concerned that the DBVI Director would lose authority by becoming a unit within DVR. Members believe this will create an additional administrative layer between the DBVI Director and the Secretary of the Agency of Human Services.
- Several requests from the SRC were made to maintain the DBVI and Designated State Agency status by moving some of the administrative functions to other divisions.
- SRC members responded to the rationale to eliminate duplicate reporting and administrative tasks by requesting that some of these duties be absorbed by other divisions. They asked why DVR and the business office could not support some of the administrative functions and have DBVI continue to operate as a Designated State Agency.
- The current Director of DBVI was asked directly if it would be possible to run DBVI with two fewer staff. He stated that he believed it was possible and submitted such a proposal to the Secretary of Human Services on October 26, 2009.
- SRC members noted that DBVI had a high level of consumer satisfaction, 96% overall satisfaction according to the most recent survey. Therefore, why change a program that is currently performing so well. There was also concern about making this change when there are no additional cost savings and probably increased costs for training as a result of the merger.
- The DBVI SRC Chair stated that he had received no notice of the changes and no opportunity to comment. The SRC Chair cited the intent of congress was for the SRC to be an independent group to serve as partners with DBVI. He explained the DBVI SRC had organized to provide detailed input on the last state plan, needs assessment, and goals for DBVI. The Chair also explained that merging the DBVI SRC into a sub-committee within the DVR SRC will be a dilution of their current role. The DBVI SRC was intended by congress to serve an important function for blind services in Vermont and should not be eliminated. The statute does not allow for elimination of the DBVI SRC. The SRC should not be placed as a sub-committee within another SRC. The statute says there can be an SRC for the blind.
- The SRC Chair also expressed concern that the current DBVI State Plan approved by RSA includes goals and strategies that require direct involvement and assistance from the current DBVI SRC.
- The Vermont chapter of the American Council of the Blind (VCB), made a formal statement opposing the merger of the two divisions. They made the following three points:
 1. First, we want to express our disappointment in the Commissioner's decision to conduct these deliberations and make the resulting decisions without collaboration or even input from consumers directly affected, including members of the State Rehabilitation Council. We fervently hope that this exclusionary behavior does not represent future practice.

2. Second, we recognize that all of us, including our government, are living in difficult financial times. We understand that it is necessary to conserve resources and utilize limited funds with extraordinary care. Therefore, while we are deeply saddened by the decision to terminate the employment of several dedicated, long time DBVI employees, we will not contest the decision to terminate their employment.
3. Third, we believe strongly that blindness and visual impairment is a disability which has profound differences from all other handicapping conditions and people with that disability require discrete, highly targeted services and supports. Therefore, we request that you abandon your intention to eliminate the Vermont Division of the Blind and Visually Impaired, which is, after all, an agency created by statute (Title 33, Sec. 503 – Composition of Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living). Rather, we request that you staff the Division with its remaining employees, with Fred Jones as its director and that you continue the delivery of services to blind Vermonters without interruption or dilution.

In response, the DAIL Commissioner, DVR Director made the following responses to the above concerns:

- At a minimum, the AHS/DAIL/DVR will maintain the proportion of funds assigned for direct vocational rehabilitation services for consumers who are blind and visually impaired, at the same level it had been when DBVI was a separate Division (12% of the available state/federal funds). Additional funds could be added, but 12% proportionality may not be reduced.
- That AHS/DAIL/DVR will maintain a State Unit for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SUBVI) as a permanent part of the structure of DVR. This new SUBVI will be 100% dedicated to providing services for people who are blind and visually impaired.
- AHS/DAIL/DVR will have a unit director for services for people who are blind and visually impaired who will be part of the DAIL management team and who will have direct line supervisory authority over unit staff.
- As part of this unit, DVR will maintain specialized vocational counselors, rehabilitation associates, assistive technology (AT) trainer, and AT evaluator, who are dedicated 100% to providing services for consumers who are blind and visually impaired.
- With the merger of DVR and DBVI, federal statute requires there be a single SRC for the consolidated division. Therefore, AHS/DAIL/DVR will support the creation and ongoing maintenance of the permanent committee (the Committee) of the DVR SRC dedicated to services for consumers who are blind and visually impaired. Two key purposes of the Committee will be to ensure the ongoing integrity of services for consumers who are blind and visually impaired and to act in an advisory capacity to DVR. It is hoped that the membership of the current DBVI SRC will become the initial members of the Committee. The Director of the State Unit for the Blind and Visually Impaired will chair the Committee.

In addition to the above responses the DAIL Commissioner stated that AHS, DAIL, and DVR would sign off on a Memorandum of Agreement to address the concerns of the DBVI SRC and the blind and visually impaired community. The purpose of the MOA will be to ensure the integrity of services and funding provided by the Agency of Human Services to Vermonters who are blind and visually impaired. A draft version of this MOA will be reviewed and discussed with the DBVI SRC on November 10, 2009.

DVR SRC Input

On November 5, 2009 DVR and the DVR SRC will meet to discuss the proposed merger of DVR and DBVI. The input from the DVR SRC will be added after that date.

4.8(b) Cooperation and Coordination with Other Agencies and Other Entities

1. Cooperation with Agencies That Are Not in the Statewide Workforce Investment System and Other Entities

For decades DVR and DBVI has maintained agreements and contracts with the Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation (VABIR), primarily to purchase job development and placement services. Because of the larger size of DVR, the general agency has VABIR placement staff in all twelve Agency of Human Services districts statewide. With the merger of the two divisions, we hope to make this expanded capacity available to consumers who are blind and visually impaired.

DBVI has maintained agreements and contracts a non-profit organizations the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired for decades. VABVI provides direct teaching and rehabilitation training to Vermonters who are visually impaired. They are the only other organization in Vermont providing services to the blind. Due to the close working relationship between the programs there are no duplication of services. The merger of the two divisions will not have any impact on these services. In the long run, we hope to build and expand on these services.

Vermont DVR has, since 2001, assisted individuals receiving TANF benefits to apply for Social Security benefits. DVR counselors working with the TANF population were receiving referrals of individuals with very severe disabilities, often undiagnosed and untreated, that prevented them from being successful in employment. The goal was to assist those with severe disabilities to receive a more stable source of support that allows them to pursue treatment options that may lead to reengagement with DVR to work on employment goals. On average, between 120 and 150 TANF recipients annually are successful in receiving Social Security benefits as a result of this program.

Some individuals within correctional facilities have severe disabilities that may prevent them from fully supporting themselves through employment and are often held in prison longer than necessary until Social Security benefits can be initiated or they are released

with no viable means of support. Representatives from the Department of Corrections, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Social Security Administration developed an early application procedure to assist inmates in securing benefits prior to their release. In FY 2007 the Department of Corrections funded two part-time DVR Social Security Assistants to serve these facilities by providing inmates with assistance in applying for benefits. In FY 2008 the Department of Corrections agreed to fund an additional part-time Social Security Specialist to provide greater coverage statewide. Currently, VR specialists provide assistance to inmates in all nine correctional facilities.

A DVR Counselor accompanies each Social Security Assistant into the facility to meet new referrals. The DVR Counselor can assess the viability of an SSI application and the need for additional DVR services, and can provide the inmate with information about services and benefits.

The SS Assistants interview the applicants to collect all information necessary for completing the application. The DVR Social Security Assistants follow the individual (even if released prior to a decision) until benefits are secured or there has been a connection made to a representative who can assist in extended appeals.

As of the end of FFY 08, 74 individuals within the correctional facilities successfully applied for Social Security benefits, with an additional 68 individuals in process or awaiting a decision.

In addition to Social Security assistance, DVR serves offenders with disabilities, both within and outside correctional facilities, to achieve employment. Employment is a critical component to prevent recidivism and to assist offenders released from prison to successfully reenter their communities. DVR has designated DVR Counselors in each district office to serve as a single point of contact for the Department of Corrections. These DVR Counselors work with personnel from Probation and Parole, Community Justice Centers, and other reentry organizations as well as employers to support the offender to find and retain employment. DVR Counselors often enter the correctional facilities to attend reentry planning meetings. If the offender is released to another district, information is transferred to that district and contact information is provided to the offender so that they may pursue DVR services after release.

During FFY 2008, the Vermont Economic Services Division approached DVR to assist individuals receiving General Assistance in applying for Social Security benefits. DVR had previously conducted a pilot in one district, and all 10 individuals who applied for benefits were granted. These individuals are extremely vulnerable, living on emergency funding only, and many have severe disabilities. Because many are homeless and few have had treatment for their disabilities – mostly mental illness – they are unable to successfully pursue employment. DVR added another 2 part-time Social Security Specialists to work with this population, and the program was rolled out statewide between April and August of 2008. At the end of FFY 08 – only a few months into full implementation – 7 individuals had been approved. As with the TANF population, DVR believes that once these individuals can stabilize their housing situations, receive

treatment, and have a more stable means of support, that they will be able to pursue employment options.

The Vermont TANF agency, the Vermont Economic Services Division (ESD), has engaged in a variety of initiatives designed to meet federal requirements for work participation rates. One initiative is an ongoing contractual relationship with Vermont DVR to provide VR services for TANF participants with disabilities. A VR counselor is designated in each DVR office to work with a capped caseload of individuals presenting with multiple barriers to employment. In addition, each VR counselor in the Reach Up program works with a part-time Employment and Training Specialist who provides work readiness and follow-along services. The DVR Reach Up program utilizes an individualized service model that focuses on graduated steps to employment including job try-outs, supported volunteer placements, job shadowing and job coaches combined with incentives for completion. Several counselors facilitate or engage a facilitator to run groups such as job clubs, skills groups and self-empowerment groups. The varying approaches support participants in gradually increasing their work participation while learning how to overcome functional barriers.

In addition to the DVR Reach Up program, ESD provided additional funding to pilot the effectiveness of purchased time slots with psychotherapists in two districts. The project hopes to demonstrate that rapid access to therapists familiar with issues faced by TANF participants will result in longer-term connection to ongoing therapy, improved functioning and earlier engagement in activities leading to employment. In addition, the project provides funding for full-time Employment and Training Specialists in the two pilot districts to provide support for earlier engagement in countable work activities.

ESD has also provided funding for case consultation, vocational assessment and job development services on a statewide basis through the Enhanced Grant project. DVR counselors serve as screeners and consultants for ESD case managers, providing guidance around activities and strategies to engage TANF participants in activities that will lead to improved functioning and employment. DVR Employment Consultants provide services for TANF participants who are ready for employment and can benefit from a supported work search. ESD has provided DVR with alternative placement funds to provide stipends for work trials, work experiences, special training situations and on-the-job training for participants in the Enhanced Grant project.

2. Coordination with Education Officials to Facilitate the Transition of Students with Disabilities from School to the Receipt of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

a. Although the Career Start Project funding ended September 2007, DVR continues to work with multiple local and State-level education and human services partners on transition issues for youth with disabilities. The Career Start Committee, comprised of a variety of partners including high level staff from DOL, DOE, DS, parenting and community groups among others, is convened by DVR and continues to meet bi-monthly. This group continues to implement the action steps described in their “white paper”:

Successfully Transitioning Vermont's Youth with Disabilities from High School to Employment, Further Education and Independent Living (created September 2006).

b. DVR now has sixteen designated School Transition Counselors operating out of all twelve DVR District Offices. These counselors work directly with practically all of Vermont high schools plus a variety of technical centers, and alternative and independent schools. Since 1999, the number of transition-aged youth served by DVR has increased by almost 85%. Transition Counselors have dedicated caseloads and they meet with students in their local high schools, sometimes beginning as early as their freshman year, and focus on both short and long-term goals. Counselors also serve as a community resource to the schools, they collaborate with interagency partnerships, and they work as catalysts for change to improve the transition process for youth with disabilities.

Youth age 14 - 24 served* and achieved a successful employment outcome since 2002:

<u>FFY</u>	<u>Youth Served</u>	<u>Percent of All Served</u>	<u>Youth Rehabs</u>	<u>Percent of All Rehabs</u>
2000	831	22%	213	19%
2001	973	24%	260	22%
2002	1,224	25%	285	23%
2003	1,405	26%	307	23%
2004	1,534	28%	349	26%
2005	1,633	29%	371	26%
2006	1,672	30%	399	27%
2007	1,687	31%	394	27%
2008	1,895	34%	461	30%

*"Served" is defined as having an open case with an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) during the year (this does not include individuals in referral or application status).

c. Core Transition Teams, composed of both education staff and adult agency/community representatives, work at the local level to develop, provide, and manage an effective transition process for students with disabilities who are at least 14 years old and may need "transition services" involving interagency partners. These Teams identify available resources and supports pertaining to individual student needs and desires for life after high school. They attempt to resolve individual and systems issues that prevent effective transitions. There are presently 17 active Core Teams with others forming. These Teams are generally convened by the DVR Transition Counselors. A second annual Core Transition Team statewide conference took place April 30, 2008.

d. The DVR Director and staff meet quarterly with the Special Education Director (Vermont Department of Education - DOE) and staff to coordinate the annual Core Transition Team Event stated above, to discuss support and collaboration regarding improvement for Indicators 13 and 14, and to stay coordinated on other transition issues. DOE Transition staff provide technical assistance to the DVR Transition Counselors, and

the DVR Transition Counselors coordinate information and education with schools in their local service areas.

e. Both DVR and DOE staff are members of the newly-formed Youth in Transition (YIT) State Team that is sponsored by the Agency of Human Services (AHS) to coordinate transition services between AHS, DOE and the Vermont Department of Labor (DOL). This group has been meeting for about one year and is providing input to the policy makers in each agency.

f. Financial responsibilities for services provided to students with disabilities are addressed in the Interagency Agreement between the Agency of Human Services and the Department of Education as signed in June 2005. That agreement states that, “For eligible students, DVR will pay for services to the extent that funds are available at the time the services are needed, including assistive technology services and devices, that are identified in an approved IPE in keeping with DVR’s order of selection for services that:

- i. are consistent with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and implementing regulations including but not limited to 34 C.F.R. §361.53; the IDEA, including but not limited to 34 C.F.R. §§300.5, 300.6, 300.347(b), and 300.348; the Assistive Technology Act of 2004, PL 108-364; and Vermont State Plan; and promote or facilitate the accomplishment of vocational rehabilitation goals and any intermediate rehabilitation objectives identified in the student’s IPE to ensure the student’s successful transition to employment, post-secondary education, or training within 12 months of the student’s exit from school.”

The Department of Education remains responsible for ensuring a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for all students with disabilities. The Agreement goes on to state: “The IDEA does not limit the responsibility of non-educational agencies from providing or paying for some or all of the costs of FAPE to children with disabilities. However, this shall not be construed to expand or otherwise alter state and/or federal law requirements imposed on any non-education agency.”

The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired has developed a long standing partnership with the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) to serve youth in transition in the school systems. VABVI uses state education funding to provide the services on a school by school basis. VABVI keeps the DBVI abreast of individual student progress and is a part of assisting DBVI as each student creates an IPE by age 16. VABVI is aware of all students who are blind or visually impaired and in school. In this way DBVI staff were assured of being aware of all eligible individuals and is able to create an IPE at age 16 or at least before they leave school. If DBVI was not able to sit in on an IEP the VABVI teacher gives updates. This relationship will continue and where possible be expanded when DBVI becomes a Unit within DVR.

In 2009 DBVI entered into an agreement with DVR to make use of their statewide system of in-school Transition Counselors. Transition Counselors are not provide intensive services in most cases (services provided by the DBVI Counselor) are able to sit

in on the occasional IEP meeting, act as a liaison to the school, keep DBVI counselor abreast of school and regional resources and be there as a possible resource for students. DBVI's transition caseload is small and it was thought there could be better statewide coverage this way versus contracting for a single, part-time coordinator. Now DBVI is becoming a Unit of DVR we expect to continue this working relationship. Now the DBVI Director will be part of the DVR management team we plan to strengthen and formalize this collaboration.

3. Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-Profit Vocational Rehabilitation Service Providers

DVR maintains Social Security Administration, Ticket to Work cooperative agreements with most of the private non-profit employment service providers in the state. Agreements exist with all the community mental health and developmental services agencies. In the spring of 2008 DVR negotiated a new Ticket to Work cooperative agreement with the agencies in anticipation of the new regulations anticipated to be published later that year. The new agreement has been in place since July 1, 2008 and has generated a lot of interest from providers. We anticipate the Ticket will generate significant new revenue for supported employment services.

4. Evidence of Collaboration Regarding Supported Employment Services and Extended Services

In FY 2010 DVR will fund 36 programs serving people with developmental disabilities, people with significant mental illness, youth with emotional/behavioral disabilities, and people with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Title VI-B funds account for about \$294,000 and about \$2 million a year is provided by Section 110 funding. Supported Employment Projects fund direct on-site and off-site supports for people with significant disabilities engaged in real, competitive work. The employment rate for customers who receive both DVR and mental health services is more than twice the rate of those who receive only mental health services. According to RSA data, Vermont's rate of placements in supported employment is almost five times the national mean.

DVR has a well established agreement with the Vermont Division of Disability and Aging Services (DDAS) to provide extended services for individuals with developmental disabilities. The primary source of funding for extended services for individuals with developmental disabilities is Home and Community-based Medicaid Waiver funds. In addition, DVR also has a well established agreement with the Department of Mental Health to provide extended services for adults with significant mental illness. The primary source of funding for individuals with severe mental illness is the Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) Case Rate funding.

For individuals with other disabilities, no state funding for extended services exists in Vermont. As a result there are limited options for providing extended services for individuals with brain injuries, sensory disabilities, severe learning disabilities and other disabilities. There are some limited options to use Social Security Administration,

Impairment Related Work Expenses or Plans to Achieve Self Support. However, these options are only feasible in a small minority of cases.

Historically, DBVI choose to send the majority of its funding (\$30,000 of \$36,000) for supported employment to support the system of the General VR Supported Employment coordinator. In this fashion DBVI has access to all the agreements for Supported Employment services agreed to by VR, such as agreements with the Division of Disability and Aging Services, TBI services, the Division for Mental Health and the local CRTs. Because of its small size and the fact that the division served a low incidence population DBVI felt that it could serve the few individuals seeking supported employment best in the above manner. Most individuals who qualify for supported employment and are visually impaired are served by other agencies as their primary disability has been identified as other than vision impairment. The small pot of dollars that DBVI does keep was to be used to support job coaches and similar services in the rare cases that are on DBVI's caseload. We do not expect this general arrangement to change with the merger of the two divisions. We do hope that the DVR supported employment coordinator will work more closely with the vocational rehabilitation counselors for the blind and visually impaired regarding consumers who may benefit from this service. The current coordinator has a background in blind services as well as supported employment and may be a great resource for these staff.

4.11 (a) Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessments of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities and the Need to Establish, Develop or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs.

The following assessment is based on the results of two separate needs assessments conducted by DVR and DBVI in coordination with their respective SRCs. In FFY 2011 the new combined division will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to assess the needs of all Vermonters with disabilities.

Methods used to conduct the DVR and DBVI Needs Assessments

DVR

Prior to the merger, DVR and the DVR SRC worked together to design a Statewide Needs Assessment to be conducted in the summer and fall of 2007. DVR consulted with RSA to ensure the proposed plan for the assessment met the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act. A formal Request for Proposals for prospective contractors to conduct the assessment was published in March 2007. In July 2007 DVR and the SRC interviewed five finalists and selected the contractor Brown, Buckley and Tucker to conduct the assessment.

The 2007 Needs Assessment design pulled data from three sources:

1. A comprehensive review of state, federal and private reports related to the service needs of people with disabilities. These would include:

- Federal sources related to disability and employment such as the Social Security Administration, Rehabilitation Services Administration, and the Department of Labor.
- State sources such as state agency annual reports, existing state needs assessments and reports from state advisory groups.
- Reports from independent community organizations and advocacy groups; for example disability advocacy organizations, parent and family groups, refugee resettlement organizations, and minority rights organizations.

2. Interviews with a representative cross-section of disability advocates, community service providers, state government officials and other interested parties regarding the vocational needs of people with disabilities.

3. Five (5) targeted focus groups with a cross-section of people with disabilities regarding the vocational needs for people with disabilities. One (1) targeted focus group with a cross-section of DVR staff.

DBVI

Prior to the merger DBVI in partnership with the DBVI SRC used the following methodologies to conduct a needs assessment.

Literature Review

This process included a review of Cornell Disability Statistics, Light House International, Glaucoma Research Foundation and a literature review completed by an intern Ako Takakura on eye disease

Consumer Satisfaction Review

Although still in its first year DBVI's new Consumer Satisfaction Survey (all closed consumers are contacted) is a valuable tool to keep an eye on possible service needs. Since survey is new and the sample was small, no significant trends were found.

Survey of Key Informants

Being a small Division in a small state DBVI had not developed a formal survey instrument for other providers and individuals who are knowledgeable about the needs of Vermonters who are blind and visually impaired. There is almost constant contact with the non-profits, state agencies and other significant providers. This year dialogues with the only other agency providing service to the blind, the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI), and with the Vermont Association for Business, Industry and Rehabilitation revealed perceived needs in transportation provision and in job development. DBVI intern Ako Takakura facilitated dialogues with the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Project and with the Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity. These dialogues clarified perceived needs in the areas of education and

outreach to minority and underserved populations.

Consumer Data Analysis

Census data was used to determine the overall profile of the Vermont population. This profile was compared to the profile of persons DBVI serves.

Stakeholder Input Review

DBVI conducted four town meetings one in each region of the state where consumers, families, providers and individuals were asked to express their thoughts on the needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired in Vermont. These statements were gathered and collated and brought to staff meetings and then to an SRC meeting and finally to a combined meeting. These meetings and discussions in between resulted in a plan to take into account all the comments, need statements, data and staff and SRC input. The results were prioritized and evaluated for reasonableness, potential effectiveness and achievability and the new goals and priorities were created.

Findings from the DVR and DBVI Needs Assessment

(i) Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their needs for supported employment.

This Needs Assessment identified several system-wide employment service limitations within Vermont. In particular these related to access to appropriate supported employment services. The needs assessment identified five groups of people with significant disabilities who are either *un-served or underserved*:

- people with cognitive disabilities who are not eligible for Vermont Developmental Services (DS) because their IQ is over 70 and/or their adaptive functioning exceeds DS criteria. This group includes individuals in the Autism Spectrum of disorders. In particular, an emerging group of parents and advocates in Vermont have shed light on a significant unmet need for persons with Autism/Asperger's Syndrome.
- people with mental illness who do not meet the criteria for the Vermont Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) program.
- people with traumatic brain injuries who do not meet eligibility criteria for existing programs.
- people with physical disabilities who need long-term support.
- people who are deaf or hard of hearing who need long-term support.

Some of these people will need *supported employment services* in order to work but long-term support services are not available to them because of program eligibility requirements.

(ii) Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals who have been un-served or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program.

The DVR/SRC Needs Assessment did not find any evidence that individuals with disabilities who are minorities were having difficulty accessing VR services. The Director of DVR serves on the Governor's Workforce Equity and Diversity Council which provides a forum to share information about the needs of various ethnic groups. On the local level, DVR staff maintain outreach activities with cultural groups active in their communities. Each office has a welcome sign posted in thirteen languages with a notice of free interpreters posted in seven languages. DVR staff access foreign language interpreters through the Refugee Resettlement Program and other providers on a routine basis. In addition, in recent years DVR has consistently met performance indicator 2.1 for minority participation in the Vermont program.

The DBVI/SRC did find evidence that the program should be serving more Vermonters who are blind or visually impaired who are minorities. Specifically that the program is not serving minorities and other underserved populations (e.g., immigrants, veterans) at a rate it should expect to according to changing census data and prevalence rates. DVR will embark on a program of education and outreach to improve its "social marketing" with a private non-profit that specializes in minority populations. Training in this type of marketing should also enhance the skills of DBVI as it seeks to raise its profile in general.

As noted above, based on the results from the Needs Assessment, there are five specific groups who have been un-served or underserved because they lack appropriate access to long-term supported employment services. In most cases these individuals are eligible for DVR services, however their efforts to achieve an employment goal are undermined because of a lack of case management supports to address other non-vocational issues or long-term vocational supports.

In addition to these groups the Needs Assessment identified two groups who may not need supported employment but whose employment needs are not being fully met due to their unique needs:

- people with disabilities who are exiting the correctional system.
- people with disabilities such as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, and some forms of mental illness who find it difficult to adhere to a set work schedule because of the nature of their disability.

In general, there is strong evidence that the Vermont DVR program has been very effective in outreaching to a high proportion of the eligible population in the state. Based on RSA ranking from 2005, Vermont DVR is ranked number one in the nation in the number of new applications and employment outcomes per million state population. Furthermore, according to RSA 2005 data Vermont DVR serves a much higher proportion of SSI (21.85%) and SSDI (36.9%) beneficiaries compared to the national average, which is 15.27% for SSI and 15.14% for SSDI beneficiaries. Vermont DVR also

has the highest level of participation in the SSA Ticket to Work program (9%) in the nation. This data suggests Vermont DVR is very active in serving individuals with the most severe disabilities.

(iii) Individuals served through other components of the statewide workforce development system.

Focus group feedback from the Needs Assessment suggests that people with disabilities see the Vermont One Stop system as a generic resource for jobs, but not necessarily a place to get more substantial support. Some focus group members expressed concerns that One Stop staff are not always aware of the needs of people with disabilities or had the resources to provide necessary supports. Responders suggested they accessed DVR for more intensive services.

It is important to note that the Vermont One Stop system has experienced a significant downsizing in the last three years, going from twelve to six district offices. In a rural state this has undoubtedly impacted the accessibility of these services. Despite this, the One Stop System does continue to serve a significant number of Vermonters with disabilities. In State Fiscal Year 2007, the Vermont One Stop System served 750 individuals with disabilities and 277 exited the system into employment. This number is almost certainly an underestimate because it is based on self-disclosed data. In addition, local DVR offices enjoy good working relationships with the One Stop Centers and routinely collaborate around services to individuals.

Finally, in the last five years DOL has recruited and hired Disability Navigators in the local offices specifically to help people with disabilities access One Stop Services and facilitate coordination of services. Currently, there are seven Disability Navigators providing services statewide.

(iv) The need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

In the Needs Assessment the primary concern expressed about the existing community rehabilitation programs was that eligibility is limited to individuals who meet the developmental services and CRT eligibility criteria. As already noted, there is a significant group of individuals who require supported employment but do not meet eligibility criteria for these services. The issue here is not the programs but the lack of funding to pay for long-term supports.

For individuals who do receive supported employment services through community rehabilitation programs, the Needs Assessment focus groups revealed general satisfaction with services with some concerns. For individuals with developmental disabilities, the primary concern was the capacity of the programs to provide services for eligible individuals. Supported employment programs are funded through Medicaid Waiver funds, VR grants and State General Fund. Focus group respondents noted that consumers often had to wait for access to employment services because community rehabilitation

programs have a limited number of employment staff. The Needs Assessments did also note that participation in supported employment for individuals with developmental disabilities had increased 55% in the last eight years. While this is a positive development it also inevitably places a strain on the program's capacity.

For the CRT supported employment programs for people with severe mental illness, the Needs Assessment focus group feedback indicated that there is some concern about the level of employment supports available. The number of dedicated employment staff within the CRT programs has decreased slightly over the last three years because of budget pressures on that system. This has been reflected in a modest decrease in the overall level of employment for CRT consumers according to the Department of Mental Health Performance Indicators.

For people who are blind or visually impaired there are a lack of services designed to help individuals find jobs or change jobs. Both employers and potential employees are often uninformed and uneducated as to the potential of workers who are visually impaired. To that end DVR seeks to create more opportunities for individuals to learn the soft skills that enhance their entrance into the job market and allow them to show their true potential at interview and in the workplace. DVR will work with organizations like VABIR to increase soft skills training and self advocacy training.

DVR also believes that individuals who are blind or visually impaired lack opportunities to demonstrate their potential and skills to employers and the general public. DVR will concentrate on developing OJT, job shadow, work trials and internships so that individuals will have the chance to showcase their skills with as little burden on potential employers.

(v) Other issues identified in the Needs Assessments.

The need for further outreach and education to the community regarding the skills and abilities and the ability to participate in their communities of individuals who are blind or visually impaired

Vermonters who are blind or visually impaired work against the perceived barriers caused by lack of knowledge among the public in general, and employers in specific, about the skills, abilities and ability to participate in their communities of individuals who are visually impaired.

DVR will work to increase its profile making it a greater resource for public education, while also taking part in events and projects that increase a positive public understanding of vision impairment. As stated above DVR will seek to increase opportunities for job exploration which will also be an opportunity for employer education.

Transportation

Access to work and training remains a barrier to Vermonters who are blind or visually impaired. This issue came up through all levels of the DBVI/SRC Needs Assessment. Some of the issues are large systemic challenges that result from Vermont being a small rural state with limited infrastructure. DVR will concentrate on individual and small scale projects, with the goal of replication or to demonstrate a workable solution for larger systems improvement. DVR will also concentrate on educating consumers on resources that already exist and may be underused.

Miscellaneous Issues

A number of other issues and interests were raised through the focus groups and targeted interviews. These were as follows:

- Responders were concerned that increased caseloads are impacting counselors' ability to provide all consumers the level of support they require to gain and maintain employment.
- Responders want DVR to focus on longer-term career development options as well as immediate employment options.
- Responders believe employer lack of experience or understanding of people with disabilities is a barrier to employment.

4.11 c (3) Order of Selection

(3) Order of Selection

Prior to the merger DBVI did not operate under an order of selection. After consultation with DBVI staff, it was determined that all current DBVI consumers would meet the Category I priority for order of selection within the DVR program. Therefore, with the merger the new agency will retain the DVR order of selection. The current DVR order of selection is as follows:

Priority Category 1: Individuals who have been determined by DVR to have the most significant disabilities are those who have two or more areas of functional loss requiring multiple services over a period of 6 months or more, either for the provision of a required service, or for the duration of the use of a provided good.

Priority Category 2: Individuals who have been determined by DVR to have significant disabilities are those who have one area of functional loss requiring multiple services over a period of 6 months or more, either for the provision of a required service, or for the duration of the use of a provided good.

Priority Category 3: Individuals who have been determined by DVR to have non-significant disabilities are those who have one or more areas of functional loss not requiring multiple services over a period of 6 months or more.

DVR does not have enough funds to offer paid services to Priority Category 3 customers at the time they are determined eligible. At the end of every quarter, DVR and the SRC reviews the number of Priority Category 3 customers who have been determined eligible in each quarter since services were last provided to customers in this category. Based on resources available, a determination is made on whether or not to serve Category 3 customers. If the decision is made to provide paid services to Category 3 customers, all in the group who were determined eligible in the same quarter are eligible for services regardless of their service needs. Between July 1, 2008 and April 2009 eight individuals were found eligible under Category 3. Eleven individuals in Category 3 received paid services during the same time period.

DVR does a good job of getting the maximum services for consumers out of the available resources. DVR increased the number of employment outcomes from 443 in 1991 to 1,523 in 2008, over a threefold increase. This was achieved without any significant increase in funding. As an agency we understand how to provide services efficiently and economically. We also have aggressively pursued funding from other sources, in particular through grants and SSA Reimbursement and Ticket to Work payments. However, without an infusion of new funds to the core Title I and Title VI-B programs it is difficult to imagine how DVR can further expand services or significantly improve the quality of our outcomes. We understand that the Administration and Congress determine the appropriation for VR and that the State Plan may not be the appropriate vehicle to advocate for new funding. Regardless, we want to go on record as stating we strongly believe DVR needs additional funding to truly meet the employment needs of eligible Vermonters.

4.11 (c) Goals and Priorities

(1) State’s Goals and Priorities for the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs.

With the merger of the two divisions, DVR and DBVI staff will have to go through a long and thoughtful process to mesh their respective goals and priorities and build together a vision for a combined agency. This interim set of goals and priorities merges the three priority areas previously identified in the DBVI state plan, employment, outreach and transition into the DVR goals and priorities. Because increasing employment outcomes was included in both plans, it is represented in goal areas 2. and 3. The DBVI priority areas of outreach and transition are included as goals 4. and 5.

With the merger of the divisions all the goal and priority areas are now the priority for the whole combined agency.

FFY 2010 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2010 Measures	FFY 2010 Targets
1. Consumer satisfaction with DVR services will increase	Biennial DVR consumer satisfaction survey and DBVI consumer satisfaction survey.	DVR will determine how to assess and merge the results of the DVR and DBVI surveys to allow for a valid measure going forward.

FFY 2010 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2010 Measures	FFY 2010 Targets
2. Consumer earnings will increase beyond the rate of inflation	RSA Performance Indicator 1.5: DVR wages compared to state average, and 1.6: own income as primary source of support.	With the merger DVR will establish new baseline targets including DBVI and DVR consumers.
3. More consumers will be employed and the rate that consumers maintain employment will increase	RSA Performance Indicator 1.2: Percentage of DVR consumers achieving an employment outcome Vermont Unemployment Insurance data to track employment retention post DVR closure	With the merger DVR will establish new baseline targets including DBVI and DVR consumers.
4. DVR will reduce prejudicial attitudes of employers and the general public regarding blindness and visual impairments, thereby increasing employment and training opportunities.	Increased employment and training opportunities for consumers who are blind or visually impaired.	Baseline data will be established in FFY 2010
5. All students with blind and visual impairments in exiting high school will complete a successful transition from school to adult life.	Post secondary education Post secondary vocational training Employment within six months of high school exit	100% of students with blind and visual impairments in exiting high school will achieve one or more of the measures.
6. Vermont employers will increase their use of DVR as an employment agency	DVR tracking of employer contacts and employers hiring DVR consumers statewide	DVR will establish in FFY 2009 a data system for tracking employer contacts. This system will be used by employment consultants statewide to track employer contacts. After establishing baselines, DVR intends to: (a) Increase the aggregate number of employers engaged with DVR by 10% by 2010 (b) Increase the number of employers who initiate contact with DVR by 10% by 2010
7. DVR employees will be satisfied with their jobs	Results from biennial DVR staff satisfaction survey	DVR staff satisfaction will be maintained at 95% (2007 rating) or higher

FFY 2010 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2010 Measures	FFY 2010 Targets
<p>8. All DVR staff will have the skills and competencies to do their jobs</p>	<p>Feedback from staff on biennial DVR staff satisfaction survey</p> <p>Feedback from consumers on biennial consumer satisfaction survey</p>	<p>In 2007 93% of staff said they had enough information to do their jobs. This will increase to 95% by 2010.</p> <p>DVR will determine how to assess and merge the results of the DVR and DBVI surveys to allow for a valid measure of this item going forward.</p>
<p>9. Increase capacity to serve unserved or underserved populations; Specifically,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals with measured IQs between 70 and 80 • Individuals with TBI • Individuals with psychiatric disabilities • Individuals in the Autism Spectrum range of disorders • Individuals with other significant disabilities who require case management services • Individuals exiting the correctional system 	<p>Implementation of services targeted at underserved populations.</p>	<p>Implementation of Pilot with Developmental Disabilities Council and VABIR to serve youth with Autism Spectrum disorders in Burlington.</p> <p>Partner with Department of Corrections to replicate VABIR/VR Pilot designed to provide job placement for individuals with disabilities who are exiting the correctional system.</p> <p>Implement the Youth Employment Specialist model to serve youth with cross disabilities through the Institute of Educational Sciences grant and/or Congressional Earmarks</p>
<p>10. DVR will work in collaboration with the DOL to ensure people with disabilities have access to services through the state workforce investment system</p>	<p>Tracking of number of people with disabilities who are accessing the DOL system</p> <p>Tracking of DVR consumers accessing DOL services.</p>	<p>DOL provided baseline data for 2007. 750 people with disabilities in total accessed One Stop Services and 277 entered employment. For FFY 2010 this will increase to 800 served and 350 entering employment.</p>
<p>11. DVR will work to improve the outcomes of community supported employment providers serving individuals with developmental disabilities and cross disabilities</p>	<p>Number of 26 closures achieved through the supported employment programs</p> <p>Total number of people with developmental disabilities employed with supports</p>	<p>Total 26 closures in State Fiscal Year 2008: 225 26 closure goal for State Fiscal Year 2010: 200</p> <p>In State Fiscal Year 2008 a total of 901 people were working in supported employment programs. This will increase to 1,000 by State Fiscal Year 2010.</p>

FFY 2010 Goals and Priorities	FFY 2010 Measures	FFY 2010 Targets
12. DVR will work to improve the outcomes of community providers serving individuals with severe mental illness	<p>Number of 26 closures achieved through supported employment programs for adults with psychiatric disabilities</p> <p>Total number of people with psychiatric disabilities employed with supports</p>	<p>Total 26 closures in State Fiscal Year 2008: 224 26 closure goal for State Fiscal Year 2010: 260</p> <p>In State Fiscal Year 2008 a total of 768 people were working in supported employment programs. This will increase to 900 by State Fiscal Year 2010.</p>

4.11 (c) (4) Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds

Seven (7) programs or services were funded by DVR in FFY 2009 using Title VI-B funds to serve approximately 248 individuals. These individuals include 188 adults with significant mental illness and 60 individuals with developmental disabilities. Total funding obligated for FFY 2009 was \$349,385.

\$1,831,174 in Title I funds were used in FY 2009 to supplement Title VI- B funds for supported employment programs. These funds supported an additional 1,022 consumers, for a total of 1,270 consumers in 36 programs. The largest groups of customers served were people with mental illness (528) followed by individuals with significant developmental disabilities (443), youth with emotional and behavioral disabilities (EBD) (252), and individuals with TBI or cross disabilities (47).

For FFY 2010 it is expected that approximately \$340,000 in Title VI-B will be available to fund supported employment programs. DVR does not anticipate any substantial change in its overall funding commitment to supported employment through Title I, Title VI-B and other legislative appropriations for FFY 2009.

Historically DBVI had transferred the bulk (\$30,000) of it's VI-B allotment to DVR. In exchange DBVI is able to have consumers avail themselves of a comprehensive and established program providing statewide coverage and the expertise of supported employment providers. With the merger of the two divisions this arrangement will continue as is, without the need to transfer funds. The DVR supported employment coordinator will consult with the DVR Blind and Visually Impaired Unit staff around individual consumers who may require supported employment to ensure they have access to available programs.

4.11 (d) Strategies to Achieve the Goals and Priorities

As with the goals and priorities the strategies were developed in response to two separate needs assessments and in consultation with two separate SRCs. While we are consolidating DVR and DBVI into one agency, we feel it is very important not to lose the

focus of the two separate processes. Therefore, we have meshed the DVR and DBVI strategies together recognizing that there may be some occasional overlap or redundancy. We did this because we wanted to be sure no strategy or initiative was lost in the process of the consolidation .

Many of these strategies are long term and require implementation over time to demonstrate results. As noted above, these strategies are designed to help DVR achieve the goals and priorities identified in 4.11 (c) (1).

Strategies to achieve DVR Goals and Priorities Identified in 4.11 (c) (1)

CUSTOMER FOCUS		
Strategy and/or Activity	Action Steps	Goal and Priority Areas
Improve communication with consumers regarding what they can expect from DVR services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DVR managers and senior counselors will develop consistent orientation information for consumers outlining clear expectations and clear roles and responsibilities for both the consumer and counselor 	1
DVR will ensure staff has the tools they need to rapidly deliver frequently needed services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DVR managers and senior counselors will develop a customer service toolkit with elements established in each VR office – to include such items as gas cards, cell phones, lap tops 	1,3, and 8
District offices will expand linkages with local employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Employment Services Manager and the local district Employer Outreach Team will utilize information from employer satisfaction survey to develop an outreach plan for each office 	1,2,3,4, and 6
Provide consumers better information on the available job market as it relates to their specific career goal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop mechanism to identify customer’s career goals and have data on local businesses to satisfy demand. 	1,2,3,6 and 8
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE AND CREATE CUSTOMER VALUE		
Strategy and/or Activity	Action Steps	Goal and Priority Areas
Systematically recognize exemplary staff performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an employee recognition panel on DVR intranet Increase use of Merit Bonus System. 	7 and 8

<p>Increase vertical and horizontal communication within the agency around strategic initiatives</p>	<p>Build alignment within organization at quarterly meetings with focused agendas that balance presentation with participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -districts/programs to host segments -state of VR report -seek feedback on areas management is unsure about - 2 field staff to attend managers meetings -tie up loose ends with Kaizen topic for quarterly meeting -foster two-way feedback loop for training to supervisors at expanded management team; staff told to expect supervisor to ask for feedback -supervisors/managers ask staff what excites them about their jobs 	<p>All</p>
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DATA MANAGEMENT – INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Strategy/or Activity	Action Steps	Goals and Priority Areas
<p>DVR will continue to become a data driven organization by improve data collection, management and utilization across all levels of the agency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In preparation for the database, complete a redesign of all DVR forms • Develop a flexible and user-friendly electronic case management system. • Develop an Employer Database • Add case service expenditures and Ticket to Work data to the DVR performance “Dashboard” 	<p>All</p>

EMPLOYEE ENRICHMENT - EMPOWERMENT

Strategy and/or Activity	Action Steps	Goal and Priority Areas
<p>Promote and recognize high performance throughout the organization regardless of staff roles within DVR. Recognize the role of all team members supporting the customer (the counselor, the employment consultant, the benefits counselor, the Vocational Evaluator).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define “high performance” and preferred “rewards” by requesting staff input via a Zoomerang Survey, using an “appreciative inquiry” format • Share results of above survey with district teams and develop local action steps. • Develop a mechanism to capture local success stories and share what works vertically and horizontally within the agency 	<p>1,2,3,5,6,7 and 8</p>

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS		
Strategy and/or Activity	Action Steps	Goal and Priority Areas
DVR will establish comprehensive and statewide emergency preparedness processes and protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide local office safety (drills and assigned roles) • Provide VR (organization-wide) de-escalation training to all staff (on-going) • Coordinate/participate with overall Building Safety planning (BGS and field directors) • Ensure VR staff who are out-stationed understood emergency protocols in work areas (transition counselors, in schools, Reach-up, DOC counselors) • Encourage staff and provide a mechanism to alert management to personal safety concerns – conduct needs assessment by Zoomerang 	8
KEY PARTNERSHIPS		
Strategy and/or Activity	Action Steps	Goal and Priority Areas
DVR will work with key partners to increase capacity to serve un-served or underserved populations, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals with measured IQs between 70 and 80 • Individuals with TBI • Individuals with psychiatric disabilities • Individuals in the Autism Spectrum range of disorders • Individuals with other significant disabilities who require case management services • Individuals exiting the correctional system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Pilot with Developmental Disabilities Council and VABIR to serve youth with Autism Spectrum disorders in Burlington. • Partner with Department of Corrections to replicate VABIR/VR Pilot designed to provide job placement for individuals with disabilities who are exiting the correctional system. • Implement the Youth Employment Specialist model to serve youth with cross disabilities through the Institute of Educational Sciences grant and/or Congressional Earmarks 	1,2, 3 and 9
DVR district offices will continue to coordinate with local DOL offices and the DOL Disability Navigators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the district offices' strategic plans, each office will identify ways to improve coordination with local DOL offices • In particular, DVR offices will partner with local DOL offices to access additional WIA funds available as a result of ARRA. 	1, 2, 3, and 10.

<p>DVR will work with the private non-profit supported employment agencies serving adults with developmental disabilities to improve services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DVR will continue to support the training and advocacy efforts of the Vermont Chapter of the Association of Persons in Supported Employment (APSE) • DVR will participate in the Developmental Services Leadership Committee with the Division of Disability and Aging Services and the provider agencies. The purpose of the committee is to promote evidence-based approaches to employment services 	<p>1,2,3, and 11</p>
<p>DVR will work with the ten (10) private non-profit adult community mental health agencies providing supported employment for adults with severe psychiatric disabilities to improve services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DVR will continue to coordinate with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the New Hampshire-Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center (PRC) to provide training and technical assistance to the agencies providing supported employment services • DVR will participate in the Mental Health Leadership Committee with DMH, the PRC and the agencies. The purpose of the committee is to promote evidence-based approaches to employment services 	<p>1,2,3 and 12</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">ARRA STIMULUS ACTIVITIES</p> <p>To be consistent with Congressional intent, DVR is planning to use all funding to support employers and job seekers with disabilities through employer incentives and short-term training to make job seekers with disabilities more competitive in this labor market.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Strategy and/or Activity</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Action Steps</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Goal and Priority Areas</p>
<p>Implementation of alternative placements to provide incentives to employers to hire DVR consumers</p>	<p>DVR will provide \$600,000 (\$100,000 per region) to job developers and counselors to establish alternative placements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temp to Hire partnerships with staffing agencies • On the Job Training agreements • Work Experiences with stipends • Internships • Necessary case service funding to support success on the job, e.g. clothing, tools, transportation, and more 	<p>1, 2, 3, 4 and 6.</p>

<p>Funding for Regional Projects</p>	<p>DVR will use ARRA funds to support projects proposed by local offices (\$50,000 per region)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff in each office will generate proposals to meet local needs to move people with disabilities to work. • These will be performance-based projects that move people to work. • CO staff are meeting with each region to develop their ideas. 	<p>All</p>
<p>Funding for employer outreach both statewide and through local offices</p>	<p>DVR will provide \$75,000 for employer outreach and education (Each office to develop Employer Outreach Plans) including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events to educate the business community about available employer incentives • Advertising to businesses • Participation in business organizations, e.g. Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, etc. • Support of the community-based Job Developer Coalitions 	<p>2,3, 4 and 6</p>
<p>Provision of short-term training for VR consumers in high-demand employment fields such as LNA, CDL, etc.</p>	<p>DVR will provide \$200,000 for short-term training for job seekers with disabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training in specific job skills areas • Duration six months or less • With jobs available in the local labor market or with agreement to relocate 	<p>1, 2 , 3, 4 and 6</p>
<p>DVR will use ARRA to expand transportation options for DVR job seekers</p>	<p>DVR will provide \$250,000 to expand transportation options for DVR job seekers including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle purchases • Other options to be explored by transportation task group. 	<p>1,2, 3 and 6</p>

<p>DVR will use ARRA funds to explore innovations to improve supported employment programs for adults with developmental disabilities and adults with severe mental illness</p>	<p>DVR will provide \$160,000 to explore innovative new approaches including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Seed money to expand Ticket to Work funding for supported employment programs •Piloting use of employers providing direct supports to supported employment consumers 	<p>11 and 12</p>
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<p>EMPLOYMENT FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED</p>		
<p>Strategy and/or Activity</p>	<p>Action Steps</p>	<p>Goal and Priority Areas</p>
<p>Increase OJT, Temp-To-Hire, Short-Term Job Shadow, Long-Term Internships</p>	<p>Collaborate with VABIR and Job Developer Coalitions to find placements. *Two placements per year in each region through the Coalition.</p> <p>Use VABIR Toolkit and create accounts for job developers to set-up work experiences. *Job developers will establish 2 work experiences per region using the toolkit and an account for placements.</p> <p>Create standardized guidelines regarding stipend practices for each work experience option. *Amounts established.</p>	<p>1, 2, 3 and 4</p>

<p>Increase level / quality of competence in soft skills.</p>	<p>Develop a complete soft skills checklist. *Comprehensive skills inventory checklist completed.</p> <p>Conduct 2 trainings per year in the state and collaborate with VABIR using their expertise.. *Have one statewide soft skills workshop developed for blind and visually impaired. *Participants will show improvement on the skills checklist.</p>	<p>1,2,3 and 4</p>
<p>Consumers will receive the appropriate technology and technology training needed to become employed or maintain employment.</p>	<p>Establish clear technology goals for each individual who needs technology / technology training. Create goals and skills tech sheet. *Upon closure, consumers will also report a final time on their efforts and results toward reaching their training goals.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a dynamic web resource to inform consumers of latest technology. Include “coming events” and give an opportunity to register on website for event announcements. Create a list of additional resources. *Visits to the DBVI website will increase each month.</p>	<p>1,2 and 3</p>
<p>Consumers will receive necessary training in order to successfully complete certification or degree programs.</p>	<p>Collaborate with college, vocational tech centers, and DOL to enroll and support consumers in formal training with certification. *One person in each region will obtain certification in one of the training options.</p>	<p>1,2,3 and 4</p>

<p>Consumers will have increased access to transportation they need to get to work.</p>	<p>Work with VABVI and other organizations to expand the number of volunteer drivers available in a region. *A driver will be available for the first 30 days for each employment related request.</p> <p>Work with Ride Share and other transportation initiatives to create and promote new opportunities. *At least one consumer in each region will use a ride share option to their job.</p>	<p>1,2,3 and 4</p>
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OUTREACH

Reduce prejudicial attitudes of employers and the general public regarding blindness and visual impairments, thereby increasing employment and training opportunities.

Strategy and/or Activity	Action Steps	Goal and Priority Areas
<p>Increase employment-related opportunities by combating perceived barriers.</p>	<p>Demonstrate services DVR has to offer for employers to encourage employment opportunities for DVR consumers (i.e., LV, Technology, O&M). Also share with Chambers, etc. *One demonstration per Region to business, Chamber, service organization, etc.</p> <p>Expand White Cane Awareness Day to educate the local community and potential employers about what DVR clients are doing for work. Also educate the public about different eye diseases. *One event per region with media coverage from newspaper and TV.</p> <p>Present nominations for the Governor’s Committee Award. Also give a certificate or letter to businesses that hire DVR consumers. Submit kudos to GCEPD newsletter for publication. *At least one statewide Governor’s Award and at least one certificate per region.</p> <p>Create public Service Announcement with high profile consumer. *One PSA</p> <p>Find intern to help with outreach. *One media intern</p> <p>All of the above strategies, and other DVR outreach activities, will include a focus on changing attitudes and educating employers about the overall capabilities of blind and visually impaired consumers – and people with disabilities in general – as employees.</p>	<p align="center">4</p>

<p>Increase profile of DVR State Unit for the Blind and Visually Impaired</p>	<p>Distribute new brochure. *Distribute 100 brochures in each region</p> <p>Collaborate with the SRC to identify and participate in existing outreach events *SRC to attend one outreach event to support DVR outreach efforts (e.g. Health Fair, etc.).</p> <p>Use website for Outreach. Promote web address on letterhead, and direct mailing. *Increase the number of visits to our site</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>Increase DVR Blind Unit communication of information about community events and learning opportunities.</p>	<p>Create email groups to reach out to blind and visually impaired consumers about events. Ask for email and permission at application. Send a mailing asking current and previous consumers for the email address. Create a sign up opportunity at our website. *Obtain at least 25 email addresses from each region.</p>	<p>4</p>

<p>Improve the ability of consumers who are blind and visually impaired to self advocate.</p>	<p>Work with the SRC to provide a training opportunity for consumers to learn effective self advocacy skills. *Train at least 8 consumers in one year (Two people from each region).</p> <p>Work with the SRC to create short videos for the website to demonstrate appropriate self advocacy in the community and the workplace. *Create two short videos for the website.</p> <p>Work with SRC to create self-advocacy resources on DBVI website. *Add links and videos to the website.</p> <p>Create an educational opportunity for parents and students to learn about issues related to transition. *Have one statewide transition conference.</p>	<p>4</p>
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TRANSITION

All students, who are blind or visually impaired, upon graduation will have a detailed plan including all necessary steps to successfully fulfill one of the following options:

- Attend college; or
- Attend vocational training; or
- Begin employment within 6-months of graduation..

Strategy and/or Activity	Action Steps	Goal and Priority Areas
<p>Increase OJT, temp-to-hire, short-term job shadowing, long term internships, and mentoring experiences for youth.</p>	<p>Increase awareness of the LEAP program through parents, schools and counselors with a goal of increasing participation in the program. *At least 8 participants per year.</p> <p>Collaborate with VR Transition Counselors or other agency resources to increase local work experience placements. *At least one work experience per region in collaboration with VR Transition Counselor or other resources.</p>	<p>1,2,3 and 4</p>

<p>Students will become proficient with assistive technology before graduating high school.</p>	<p>Adopt or create a suitable Technology Transition Checklist.</p> <p>Work with VABVI teachers to encourage and explore the development of a curriculum/educational program for all students that will teach them to use technology effectively. This will increase their success in school and for securing employment. It should be a one year course that will earn the student school credit.</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>All eligible 16 year old students will be given the opportunity to participate when it is determined that the DVR Blind and Visually Impaired Unit is the most appropriate agency to provide services.</p>	<p>Collaborate with VABIR, DS Services, and VR to develop and utilize a tracking spreadsheet.</p> <p>Counselors will meet with TVI's in their region at the (beginning, middle, and end of each school year to discuss students and to establish contact and offer an opportunity to participate to all students who will be 16. *Meetings take place in each region.</p> <p>Counselors will meet with the VR Transition Counselor in their region as needed to discuss local resources and opportunities for students. *Meetings take place in each region.</p>	<p>4</p>

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The DVR Assistive Technology Project (AT) works closely with DVR field offices to ensure appropriate assistive technology services and devices are available throughout the rehabilitation process. Assistive Technology Specialists are co-located with VR staff in Rutland and Waterbury with a third office in Randolph. Together they provide statewide coverage. The AT Specialists meet with customers in their homes, on job sites, in schools, or in VR offices to assess needs and train individuals on the use of various devices. The Project provides try-out workshops so customers can get a hands-on demonstration of various low and high-tech devices. A more extensive try-out center was developed in Waterbury so customers can test an even wider variety of devices. AT Specialists are also involved in the development of IPEs on an as needed basis.

4.11 (e) (2) Evaluation and reports of progress: Evaluation of the extent to which goals in 4.11 (c) (1) identified in the FFY 2008 State Plan were achieved.

As noted, DVR and DBVI are merging into a combined agency. However, the following progress reports are for activities and progress that occurred while they were separate divisions. Therefore, the following progress reports are broken out separately for DBVI and DVR.

Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired

The following chart provides an update on Vermont DBVI's progress toward achieving the goals and priorities identified in the FFY 2008 State Plan.

Progress Report on Federal Fiscal Year 2008 State Plan Goals

(Covers Period October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008)

Overall Goal – Employment		
Increase the number of individuals with employment outcomes each year.		
Goals and Priorities	Measures	Targets and Updated Results

<p>1. Consumers, providers, employers, and the general public will have increased awareness of DBVI services due to Outreach activities.</p>	<p>Participants will show a positive change in awareness as measured by a DBVI event survey.</p>	<p>1.1 Develop/enhance a presentation kit (Peggy has existing kit) to present to: Kit done, all offices have a kit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VABIR, Vt. Businesses for Social Responsibility- • Ophthalmologists-Seeking invitation to state conference. <p>1.2 Explore newsletter and or page in the VABVI “Voice”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing new this year, will enhance effort for ht VABVI Voice this year <p>1.3 Family education links on DBVI website increased.- Family Education link is on website. Progress made on enhancement of Website as Department is upgrading all sites; a specific heading for Parents/Families has been created. Site on hold as Department changes protocols to match State requirements.</p> <p>1.4 Collaborate with the SRC to develop consumer driven events- Had first SRC sponsored “town meeting” consumer “needs” forum event in Springfield, four more planned 40 attended</p> <p>1.5 Governor’s Committee Award- In progress for FFY10</p> <p>1.6 Present DBVI at DDAS meeting-not done</p> <p>1.7 Distribute SILC school curriculum- SILC is retooling its curriculum distribution program</p> <p>1.8 Public Service Announcement with high profile consumer- Not done, idea is strongly backed by SRC, will probably be a part of next Goals and Priorities</p> <p>1.9 A new brochure has been created, waiting for Website to come on-line before distribution.</p>
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<p>2. DBVI will provide or facilitate new training and new pre-vocational training opportunities. DBVI will create and offer at least 2 new vocational workshops based on identified consumer needs.</p>	<p>Participants will express a high level of satisfaction with workshop content and relevance of the topics.</p>	<p>2.1 Develop protocol to determine existing pre-vocational services (e.g., VABIR, DET, VR) to enhance consumer access- done, available via intranet</p> <p>Coordinate with Technology group to develop computer Access.</p> <p>Set up activities to share vocational tools at staff meetings. Explore new tools and identify gaps- Ongoing</p> <p>Expand work trial opportunities with private sector- VABIR working on project, tool kit available to job developers, presented to staff as resource</p> <p>Develop organizational skills assessment-Ongoing</p> <p>Develop resource for counselor support around consumer behavior issues. Started semi-monthly round table meetings with professional psychologist present. Continuing in FFY 2010</p> <p>Self- Advocacy Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore existing curriculum-Have created curriculum for summer youth employment program, specifically around job issues, includes self-assessment form • develop program for DBVI- Working with SRC to create a training plan. <p>2.8 Employment Support groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-employment - Done • Employment groups statewide- Montpelier ran one in FFY09 Two statewide training sessions a goal.
<p>3. Consumers will benefit from at least 3 new alternative workplace options.</p>	<p>At least 3 consumers will be placed in a work from home opportunities or the new “State as a Model” employment initiative.</p>	<p>3.1 Explore job development with “High Tech”- Nothing ongoing</p> <p>3.2 Explore general home work options- Are working with the General VR to create opportunities. DBVI is working to create home work with a company in Newport that has already provided site based opportunities for individuals who are visually impaired.</p> <p>3.3 Meet with state Human Resources around hiring individuals with vision Impairments.- Have contacted HR director and will follow-up. No new progress</p>
<p>4. DBVI staff will rewrite policies and guidelines that better explain the procedures for OJT, work trials, supported employment, and self-employment plans.</p>	<p>DBVI staff will evaluate the usefulness of new policies and guidelines after final approval and implementation for one year.</p>	<p>4.1 Set up system of guidelines and policies around Individual Development Accounts and using Micro-Business consulting services- Done.</p> <p>4.2 Develop guidance and policy on job shadows, OJT, work trials, ETS service, Supported Employment.- Done, on intranet</p> <p>4.3 Self-employment policy and guidelines.- Done.</p>

5. Consumers will benefit from expanded job development.	There will be a consistent increase in the number of people served and placed as a result of job development activities in the NE Kingdom and Montpelier Region.	5.1 Find resources to fund job developer position for northeastern VT and to expand the transition coordinator position. . Job developer has been hired for the Montpelier region. Transition Coordinator position has been changed to an agreement with VocRehab VT to utilize resources of in school Transition counselors. 5.2 Explore possible new grant opportunities with VR, DET, SSA (SSA w/ Jim Pontbriand)- No progress 5.3 Research grants from AFB and others on public awareness. No progress
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Overall Goal – Transition

All students upon graduation will have a detailed plan including all necessary steps to successfully fulfill one of the following options:

- Attend college; or
- Attend vocational training; or
- Begin a high quality job within 6-months of graduation.

Goals and Priorities	Measures	Targets and Updated Results
1. At age 16 a decision about appropriate vocational rehabilitation services will be made for each visually impaired student.	All 16-year-old visually impaired students on the transition caseload will have a transition plan.	1.1 Develop criteria and guidelines that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What services are needed?- New criteria and job specs for Transition coordinator have developed. No longer is there a single Transition coordinator, there is an agreement to utilize resources of Voc Rehab’s statewide in-school Transition Counselor Team. • How significant are the vision related services? – ongoing • An appropriate referral system for level “C” students.- ongoing Develop guidelines to ensure that some form of Transition Plan exists for each DBVI eligible student (e.g. IPE, IEP, other).- done

<p>2. Deliver training and information to families, case managers, teachers, school teams, and administrators for issues related to the transition of DBVI eligible students.</p>	<p>Recipients will show increased knowledge of transition services as a result of training and/or consultation as measured by a DBVI survey.</p>	<p>2.1 Meet with special education administrators in each region to explain transition services.-No meetings.</p> <p>2.2 Develop a long-term transition outreach strategy with VABVI.- Position no longer located at VABVI, position utilizes VocRehab’s statewide in-school Transition counselor Team and works case-by-case with VABVI itinerant teachers.</p> <p>2.3 Develop quarterly transition related articles that are inserted into the VABVI Voice.- Not done</p> <p>2.4 Develop PSA announcements about DBVI/VABVI transition services. No progress</p> <p>2.5 Rehab Associates meet with TVIs twice/year to discuss the pre-transition component of the IL program.- Has happened twice only Plan meeting and create necessary written materials including updates to the policy manual and a written response to our previous meeting with the TVIs.</p>
<p>3. Create opportunities for students to increase their levels of independence and social skills.</p>	<p>Participating students will evaluate their increased independence based on a survey of their DBVI sponsored experiences (e.g. IL Pilot and camp).</p>	<p>3.1 Develop a plan with the Vermont Parent Information Center to create workshops for student self-advocacy, disability knowledge, and problem solving- Plan for problem solving/self advocacy has been created and is being modified for the LEAP summer program.</p> <p>3.2 Develop a plan with Parent to Parent about ways to network parents. Plans are in progress for possible family event to create networking possibilities, new Website should enhance this process when finished.</p> <p>3.3 Conduct a pilot project to provide IL skills training for students age 14-16. RA will serve as a broker for the services. Piloted Weekend IL apartment programs, need to find more appropriate cost effective site. LEAP summer program is providing this in depth and will continue expansion to two sessions, one in town and one wilderness.</p> <p>3.4 Create opportunities for job interview practice. Use the VABIR curriculum to sponsor one event during the school year. Is being done during LEAP program.</p>

<p>4. Students will have more opportunities to improve their vocational readiness for life beyond high school.</p>	<p>At least 5 students will use the newly developed transition checklist and Choice program.</p>	<p>4.1 Develop a plan with the Education Department and VABVI to promote a high level of student technology proficiency. No plan developed yet.</p> <p>4.2 Develop a plan to create opportunities for students to become evaluated using the Choice program and other vocational assessments. Modified while new system of working with the VocRehab Counselor's is established.</p>
<p>5. Promote high expectations for student vocational goals, achievement and independence.</p>	<p>An annual parent survey will show a high level of expectations regarding student vocational goals, achievement, and independence.</p>	<p>5.1 Devote a section of each DBVI newsletter that highlights student success related to career exploration and planning. Newsletter has been dropped for now, lack of staff time for quality product.</p> <p>5.2 Develop a resource list of family counseling options. List created, waiting for new Website to open under ner new Sate protocols.</p> <p>5.3 Create learning opportunities for parents through NAPVI.- New NAPVI group being formed in VT.</p> <p>5.4 Create a plan to increase job exploration activities for transition age students.- Summer LEAP program</p>

Overall Goal – Technology

Upon closure, all consumers will have appropriate technology and training to meet the goals in their IPE.

Goals and Priorities	Measures	Targets and Updated Results
<p>1. DBVI staff will rewrite policies and guidelines that better define technology services and procedures.</p>	<p>DBVI staff will evaluate the usefulness of new policies and guidelines after final approval and implementation for one year.</p>	<p>1.1 Update Maintenance Agreement including consumer responsibility for: Draft done, needs rewrite and approval.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virus protection • Software upgrades • Replacement of computer, etc. <p>1.2 Create policies to address. Policies written and being used but need final SRC approval.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who gets equipment? • Who gets training? • Levels of priority? <p>1.3 Revise IL Policy to address current technology needs. Policies await changes in homemaker policies.</p>

<p>2. Consumers will receive technology services that are based on clear and measurable goals.</p>	<p>Consumers will express, at exit interview, their clear understanding of goals, activities, and steps taken to achieve IPE goals using technology.</p>	<p>1.1 Create technology Referral Form- In Process</p> <p>1.2 Create technology Report Form that identifies goals, activities, and next steps. –Not done</p> <p>1.3 Create technology “User Group.” SRC initiative</p> <p>1.4 Create technology brochure, in year-two, after policies are developed. Not done.</p> <p>1.5 Advocate for early technology intervention for students not yet eligible for the DBVI Transition program. Being done by staff on case-by case basis.</p>
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Strategies-Transition – DBVI has changed its approach is now utilizing an agreement with Voc Rehab Vermont to work with their statewide system of in-school Transition counselors. DBVI Counselors will also work closely with VABVI itinerant teachers in the schools on case-by-case basis. While VR counselors lack in depth knowledge on vision impairment, they do bring local knowledge on school resources, key personnel, employment opportunities and community resources. The DBVI counselors and VABVI teachers will provide needed vision expertise. DBVI continues to proud of collaboration around the summer youth LEAP program, now in its third year with all new staff.

Technology-Although not fully implemented yet the new policy guidelines will allow staff to have fuller knowledge control of who has and who gets technology. The rising cost and the rising necessity for this adaptive technology is an area that DBVI must get a handle on in a time of rising costs and fewer dollars.

Employment- DBVI has found that use of employment specialist/job developers is essential to assist Counselors with heavy caseloads and consumers who are finding it difficult to find meaningful employment. To that end DBVI has hired a part-time job developer in the Montpelier/Northeast Kingdom and is considering how to enhance the job development service in the Rutland area. The Montpelier job developer has already placed several consumers in an area where opportunities are few and is now trying to expand opportunities into home work.

The above strategies outline the main areas of innovation and expansion that DBVI is supporting- the LEAP program for transitional youth and the growth of job development and the employment specialist roles in the division. DBVI has also found out about more needs around the state through a series of “town meetings” in the various regions. Consumers and stakeholders are invited to open forums to express their views on the perceived needs of consumers of DBVI services and individuals in general who are blind and visually impaired in Vermont. These meetings will continue in combination with region community events (picnics, sailing, skiing etc.) to not only enhance community participation, but seek to question consumers on the needs of the blind and visually impaired in VT.

Standards and Indicators- Vermont met 5 of the 6 indicators in Standard 1 and met all the Primary indicators in the latest year available FY07. The Indicator not met was 1.1 that measures a numerical change in successful outcomes. As DBVI decreases its percentage of Homemakers as successful outcomes it stands to reason that its total outcomes will drop as the homemaker category shrinks so will the total as DBVI readjusts its efforts. DBVI expects the total # of outcomes to remain somewhat static, because of a slowed economy the number of placements may be hard raise, however this should be balanced by an increased effort on job placements vs. homemakers, as well as more emphasis on job development.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

The following chart provides an update on Vermont DVR’s progress toward achieving the goals and priorities identified in the FFY 2008 State Plan. Not all of the data measures are collected annually so in some cases no new data is available. Overall, we are very pleased that overall satisfaction with DVR services has increased from 84% in 2006 to 89.2% in 2008. In addition we have seen a significant jump in our rehabilitation rate (Performance Indicator 1.2) from 60% in FFY 2006 to 67% in FFY 2008.

Progress Report on Federal Fiscal Year 2008 State Plan Goals

(Covers Period October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008)

Goals and Priorities	Measures	Targets and Updated Results
1. Consumer satisfaction with DVR services will increase	Biennial consumer satisfaction survey.	Overall consumer satisfaction will increase from 84% in 2006 to 88% in 2008 Survey. Actual: 89.2%
2. Consumer earnings will increase beyond the rate of inflation	RSA Performance Indicator 1.5: DVR wages compared to state average, and 1.6: own income as primary source of support. Vermont Unemployment Insurance data looking at longer term earnings trends post DVR closure	1.5: DVR consumer wages will increase from 65% of state average to 67% of state average. Actual FFY 2008: 65% 1.6: DVR will increase the percentage of consumers achieving self support from 44.1% to 53% Actual FFY 2008: 44.34%
3. More consumers will be employed and the rate that consumers maintain employment will increase	RSA Performance Indicator 1.2: Percentage of DVR consumers achieving an employment outcome Vermont Unemployment Insurance data to track employment retention post DVR closure	1.2: DVR consumers achieving an employment outcome will increase from 60% to 63%. Actual FFY 2008: 67% Percentage of DVR consumers who retain employment two years post closure will increase from 69% to 80%. No new data available

<p>4. Vermont employers will increase their use of DVR as an employment agency</p>	<p>DVR tracking of employer contacts and employers hiring DVR consumers statewide.</p>	<p>DVR will establish in FFY 2008 a data system for tracking employer contacts. This system will be used to track increases or decreases in employer contacts in subsequent years. Not accomplished in FFY 08. Data tracking system is now in place. DVR is looking to establish SharePoint as the statewide tracking mechanism for both DVR and VABIR Employment Consultants beginning in the fall of 2009 in order to establish a single statewide data collection system.</p>
<p>5. DVR employees will be satisfied with their jobs</p>	<p>Results from biennial DVR staff satisfaction survey</p>	<p>DVR staff satisfaction will be maintained at 95% (2007 rating) or higher No data. Next survey scheduled for 2009. However, in January 2009 DVR was selected as one of 15 “Best Places to Work in Vermont”</p>
<p>6. All DVR staff will have the skills and competencies to do their jobs</p>	<p>Feedback from staff on biennial DVR staff satisfaction survey</p> <p>Feedback from consumers on biennial consumer satisfaction survey</p> <p>Staff completion of certificate programs and other related training programs</p>	<p>In 2007 93% of staff said they had enough information to do their jobs. This will increase to 95% by 2009. No new data.</p> <p>In 2006 84% of DVR consumers said they were satisfied with the services provided. By 2008 88% of consumers will be satisfied with the services provided. Data from 2008 Customer Satisfaction Survey: 88% of consumers satisfied with services provided</p> <p>DVR training coordinator will develop a database to track completions in 2008. DVR training coordinator tracks all staff training and completion through AHS Training Database</p>

<p>7. Increase capacity to serve un-served or underserved populations, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals with measured IQs between 70 and 80 • Individuals with TBI • Individuals with psychiatric disabilities • Individuals with other significant disabilities who require case management services 	<p>Increase in access to case management services for non-categorical populations.</p> <p>Decrease in status 8, 28 and 30 closures</p>	<p>DVR will partner with mental health and developmental services to pilot two sites to implement non-categorical case management services in 2008.</p> <p>DVR will track closures for consumers in these two sites and assess the impact on 8, 28 and 30 closures.</p> <p>Update: Project not initiated due to state budget issues</p>
<p>8. DVR will work in collaboration with the DOL to ensure people with disabilities have access to services through the state workforce investment system</p>	<p>Tracking of DVR consumers accessing DOL services.</p> <p>Tracking of number of people with disabilities who are not DVR consumers accessing the DOL system</p>	<p>DVR will coordinate with DOL to collect baseline data.</p> <p>Not initiated</p> <p>DOL has determined 2007 data was inaccurate. Therefore it is not possible to compare 2007 and 2008 data.</p> <p>Update: In SFY 2008 750 individuals with disabilities received services and 277 became employed</p>
<p>9. DVR will work to improve the outcomes of community supported employment providers serving individuals with developmental disabilities and cross disabilities</p>	<p>Number of 26 closures achieved through the supported employment programs</p> <p>Total number of people with developmental disabilities employed with supports</p>	<p>Total 26 closures in State Fiscal Year 2006: 188 26 closure goal for State Fiscal Year 2008: 210</p> <p>Actual: 26 closures for State Fiscal Year 2008: 225</p> <p>In State Fiscal Year 2006 a total of 831 people were working in supported employment. This will increase to 1,000 by State Fiscal Year 2008.</p> <p>SFY 2007 Data: 885 SFY 2008 Data: 901</p>
<p>10. DVR will work to improve the outcomes of community providers serving individuals with severe mental illness</p>	<p>Number of 26 closures achieved through supported employment programs for adults with psychiatric disabilities</p> <p>Total number of people with psychiatric disabilities employed with supports</p>	<p>Total 26 closures in State Fiscal Year 2006: 195 26 closure goal for State Fiscal Year 2008: 220</p> <p>Actual: 26 closures in SFY 2008: 224</p> <p>In State Fiscal Year 2006 a total of 826 people were working in supported employment. This will increase to 1,000 by State Fiscal Year 2008.</p> <p>Actual SFY 2008: 768</p>

Strategies that contributed to the achievement of the DVR goals and priorities and factors that impeded achievement of goals and priorities.

Goal and Priority 1: Consumer satisfaction with DVR services will increase

As noted, overall consumer satisfaction for DVR services increased from 84% in 2006 to 89.2% in 2008. The consumer satisfaction survey was conducted by an independent contractor to ensure consumer confidentiality. A statistically representative sample of 707 DVR consumers was contacted by the contractor to participate in the satisfaction survey.

We believe a number of factors have contributed to this very high level of consumer satisfaction. While it is difficult to identify any particular one initiative that may have had the most impact on this measure, we do credit the team approach to services as a key factor. As a general practice each VR consumer is served by a team of staff including (as appropriate) the VR counselor, the job developer/employment consultant, a benefits counselor, a vocational evaluator and an employment specialist. We believe this team approach ensures a rapid delivery and close coordination of services that best serves the customer.

Goal and Priority 2: Consumer earnings will increase beyond the rate of inflation

We have not seen any significant change in Performance Indicators 1.5 and 1.6 from FFY 2007 to FFY 2008. We first identified these measures in our FFY 2008 State Plan and do not believe enough time has passed to see significant movement in these data measures.

Goal and Priority 3: More consumers will be employed and the rate that consumers maintain employment will increase

As noted, between FFY 2006 and FFY 2008 the rehabilitation rate (Performance Indicator 1.2) increased from 60% to 67%. This indicator was identified as an area for improvement in the 2007 RSA site visit. After the site visit DVR implemented a number program and process changes to address the issue. These included:

- Encouraging counselors to do more vocational evaluation (when appropriate) prior to committing to an employment plan.
- Emphasizing the use of alternative placements (job shadows, work trials, OJTs, temp to hire arrangements) to increase consumer exposure to real employment settings.
- Expanding employer outreach at the state and local levels.

Goal and Priority 4: Vermont employers will increase their use of DVR as an employment agency

As noted, we do not currently have data to track this goal. A database will be in place by the end of 2009. In the meantime DVR has made it a major strategic priority to increase outreach to employers. In 2007 DVR hired Hugh Bradshaw as the DVR Employment Services Manager. He has spearheaded the division's efforts to conduct consistent outreach at both the state and local levels. This has included a statewide marketing effort using radio ads and high quality marketing materials developed by SPIKE Inc. At the local level each district office has developed local outreach plans including employer events, local advertising and marketing of alternative placement options.

Goal and Priority 5: DVR employees will be satisfied with their jobs

DVR will be conducting a new staff satisfaction survey in 2009. No new data is currently available. However, in January 2009 DVR was selected as one of the 15 "Best Places to Work in the Vermont." The nomination is based on staff responses to an online survey.

Goal and Priority 6: All DVR staff will have the skills and competencies to do their jobs

As noted, we do not have any new data from the staff satisfaction survey regarding this priority area. However, data from the 2008 consumer satisfaction survey indicated that 88% of DVR consumers were satisfied with the specific services they received. We think this reflects an ongoing commitment to training and staff development throughout the division.

Goal and Priority 7: Increase capacity to serve un-served or underserved populations; specifically, individuals with measured IQs between 70 and 80, individuals with TBI, individuals with psychiatric disabilities, and individuals with other significant disabilities who require case management services

DVR in partnership with the Department of Mental Health initiated a significant effort to provide case management services for individuals in the above groups. Many individuals in these groups require ongoing case management services as part of their employment plan. They often lose jobs because they lack the necessary supports outside of the workplace. This pilot would have gone along way to filling that need.

Unfortunately, the program was cut as part of the unprecedented fiscal crisis that hit the nation in the fall of 2008. We do not expect to be able to start the pilot in the foreseeable future.

Goal and Priority 8: DVR will work in collaboration with the DOL to ensure people with disabilities have access to services through the state workforce investment system

DVR did not initiate a tracking system to determine how many DVR consumers were also being served by DOL. Technical and confidentiality issues prevented DVR from developing a reliable system to gather this information.

DOL has provided DVR baseline data for SFY 2008 on the number of individuals with disabilities served and placed in employment through the One Stop System. DVR will track this data annually.

Goal and Priority 9: DVR will work to improve the outcomes of community supported employment providers serving individuals with developmental disabilities and cross disabilities

DVR received mixed data findings regarding the supported employment outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities. The total number of VR consumers achieving an employment outcome dropped from 188 in SFY 2006 to 175 in SFY 2007 and increased to 225 in SFY 2008. However, the total number of individuals with developmental disabilities supported in employment increased from 831 in SFY 2006 to 885 in SFY 2007 to 901 in SFY 2008. DVR believes the overall number of individuals supported in employment is by far the more important measure of progress. This aggregate number of persons employed has been on an upward trend for over a decade.

DVR believes that the employment success of individuals with disabilities is partially related to the ability of providers and VR staff to effectively and efficiently meet the needs of the employers hiring supported employee participants. DVR has, with the financial support of a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, facilitated the establishment of coordinating coalitions of community employment professionals around Vermont. During SFY 2008 and SFY 2009 we observed increasing numbers of community supported employment providers becoming active members of these coalitions. DVR believes that these coordinated employer outreach efforts will lead to increased meaningful employer connections for these supported employment providers. The research we read suggests that relationship-based and coordinated employer outreach is crucial to achieve good employment results during a recession.

DVR believes the long-term investment made in training and technical assistance services through the University of Vermont has helped maintain the quality of services. During SFY 2009, due to budget reductions in both DVR and the Division of Disability and Aging Services (DDAS), the UVM technical assistance contract was reduced by half. Further budget pressures for both DVR and DDAS led to a decision not to renew this contract for SFY 2010. The TACE Center (New England Technical Assistance and Continuing Education) was recently organized and funded as the New England RCEP by RSA. The TACE Center has identified the provision of technical assistance and training to Vermont supported employment providers during SFY 2010 as a priority during its recent needs assessment. DVR and DDAS intend to work together closely over SFY10

to re-establish effective and accessible technical assistance for VT supported employment providers.

In addition, the State Division of Disability and Aging Services has continued to place a strong emphasis on supported employment services despite tight fiscal times. For example, DDAS continues to include employment as a funding priority in the system of care plan for people with developmental disabilities. While recent DDAS budget rescissions of Medicaid dollars have led to reduced supported employment ongoing support services, they have not been reduced at the same level as other community support services. DDAS held public hearings during the spring of 2009 to review options for changing the system of care plan as a response to the current fiscal climate. There is concern that DDAS may feel forced to restrict access to Medicaid-supported employment services. DDAS and DVR are jointly sponsoring the establishment of a statewide supported employment leadership team. This team should begin meeting during the fourth quarter of SFY 2009 with the aim of developing an actionable supported employment strategic plan for implementation during SFY 2010. This will provide a venue to strategically develop a Vermont response to the current fiscal crisis while developing a sustainable and relevant approach for the provision of SE services. DDAS also maintains a full-time staff person, Jennie Masterson, focused on supported employment. Ms. Masterson works closely with the DVR Supported Employment Coordinator in jointly monitoring supported employment programs.

Vermont VR anticipates the receipt of 1.58 million dollars of ARRA stimulus funding. We are actively engaging with the network of supported employment providers so that they have meaningful access to the employment initiatives funded by ARRA. Workgroups are being established to develop criteria and processes so that consumers involved with achieving career goals which require ongoing supports from one of our supported employment providers will be able to effectively use the “toolkit” of approaches funded by ARRA.

Goal and Priority 10: DVR will work to improve the outcomes of community providers serving individuals with severe mental illness

DVR received mixed data findings regarding the supported employment outcomes for individuals with severe mental illness. The total number of VR consumers achieving an employment outcome increased from 195 in SFY 2006 to 231 in SFY 2007 and decreased to 224 in SFY 2008. However, the total number of individuals with mental illness supported in employment decreased from 826 in SFY 2006 to 803 in SFY 2007 to 768 in SFY 2008. It is noteworthy that the overall enrollment of individuals with mental health disorders in Vermont’s CRT programs (community mental health programs which house Vermont’s supported employment programs for people with mental illness) decreased from 2971 individuals in SFY 2007 to 2928 individuals in SFY 2008. However, the employment rate reflects a slight decrease in the percentage of CRT participants supported in employment from 28% in SFY 2006 to 27% in SFY 2007 to 26% in SFY 2008. DVR believes the overall number of individuals supported in

employment is by far the more important measure of progress. The slight decrease is worrying because it suggests individuals are getting jobs but not sustaining them.

Information from the DVR/SRC Needs Assessment and anecdotal reports from field staff suggest that there are not sufficient numbers of employment staff within the community mental health agencies to provide the necessary supports. In addition, there has been significant turnover in some programs, with a loss of experienced staff. Also it has been reported that some agencies or agency staff do not value employment as a core mental health service.

In response to the overall decrease in overall employment of individuals with mental illness along with the noted capacity issues, DVR has implemented a number of overlapping strategies including a DVR/DMH Mental Health and Employment Leadership Committee made up of state and agency staff, and consumer representation. With financial assistance from Vermont's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), the Leadership Group successfully framed and has been guiding a statewide strategic planning process that addresses many key employment service issues. The current MIG is supporting the rollout of the statewide strategic plan which includes the statewide routine implementation of IPS (Individual Placement and Support) Fidelity Reviews to support the consistent implementation of supported employment processes which are based on the SAMHSA evidenced-based practice.

In addition, DVR and DMH continue to support training and technical assistance in evidence-based supported employment through the New Hampshire/Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center.

We continue to expect the 2008 Ticket to Work (TTW) regulations to provide a boost in resources and an incentive to increase outcomes for agencies. Vermont's supported employment providers will receive \$51,891 in TTW revenue (provider share under DVR joint Employment Network agreement) which was collected during calendar year 2008 for use in their employment programs during SFY10. This is an increase from the \$23,856 collected during calendar year 2007. The majority of this revenue (which is the community provider share according to VT VR's joint Employment Network agreement) will be disbursed to providers of employment services to persons with mental illness. Our projections are that these revenues will continue to increase.

Planned Innovation and Expansion in FFY 2010

1. The SSDI Benefit Offset Pilot will continue into FFY 2010 and begin ramp-down activities. This Pilot is a random assignment study to test what would happen if SSA removed the "Substantial Gainful Activity" (SGA) \$980 "cash cliff" built into the program. This encourages SSDI recipients to "park" their earnings just below the \$980 level to retain benefits. Unfortunately, that means that these people are frequently underemployed and living in poverty. The demonstration project measures what happens if an incentive is provided to work at a higher earnings level. In this case, for every \$2

earned over the \$980 level, the SSDI recipient loses \$1 of their benefit level. This gradual decrease in benefit level allows a greater income while protecting benefits and benefit eligibility in case the person is not able to sustain the higher earned wage level. The Vermont Pilot enrolled a total of 579 beneficiaries in the pilot, which is approximately 8% of the eligible population in the state. This year the project produced data indicating that SSDI beneficiaries with the \$1 for \$2 offset were more likely to work above the SGA threshold. These effects were greater for beneficiaries who were also enrolled in the State Medicaid Buy In Program. Findings from this pilot have national implications for the SSDI program. Vermont co-authored a policy brief with the three other pilot states (Wisconsin, Utah and Connecticut) that has been shared broadly with policy makers and advocates including the Social Security Advisory Board, the General Accountability Office and the Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities.

2. DVR has partnered with the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council to establish a pilot to serve youth with Autism Spectrum disorders in the Burlington area. The pilot will hire a Youth Employment Specialist to partner with a DVR counselor to work with youth in transition from school to adult life. The Youth Employment Specialist will develop a variety of real work opportunities and work experiences for youth in the last two years of high school and the period immediately post high school exit.

3. DVR plans to partner with an external evaluator from Abt Associates to evaluate the impact of the “alternative placement approach” (see Strategies to Achieve Goals and Priorities). DVR is investing a substantial portion of ARRA funds (\$600,000) to implement a range of alternative placements statewide. We are interested in understanding the impact of this infusion of resources on the following:

- Employment outcomes
- Employer outreach efforts
- Employer attitudes

We believe the alternative placement approach allows DVR consumers to rapidly engage in real employment experiences that will help them move forward toward their employment goal. Alternative placements allow consumers to try out employment in low risk arrangements such as company tours, job shadows, short-term work experiences, temp to hire arrangements and OJTs. Such arrangements also allow the employer low risk options to try out potential employees. More often than not, the experience of getting to know a VR consumer through a work experience will open up opportunities for permanent employment.

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

In State Fiscal Year 2008, the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation funded thirty-seven (37) Supported Employment grants serving four distinct disability groups: 1) fourteen (14) programs for individuals with developmental disabilities; 2) ten (10)

programs for adults with significant mental illness; 3) ten (10) programs for youth with emotional and behavioral disabilities; and 4) three (3) programs for individuals with traumatic brain injury. This funding resulted in almost 500 individuals with significant disabilities becoming employed in the competitive job market.

DVR is able to support individuals with the most significant disabilities to find and keep stable competitive work through its valuable relationship with the Division of Disability and Aging Services (DDAS) and the Department of Mental Health (DMH).

Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

DVR works closely with DDAS to provide supported employment services and DVR funds are viewed, along with Medicaid funds, as an integral part of the overall employment budget for individuals with developmental disabilities. This funding blends DVR funding with individual Medicaid Waiver funds to create a seamless structure of upfront and ongoing support. DVR funds are specifically allocated to provide assessment, training, and placement services until closure, with Medicaid Waiver funds providing the necessary long-term follow-up.

DVR and DDAS no longer support employment workshops and Vermont closed its last workshop for individuals with developmental disabilities in 2002. That same year, Vermont was ranked #1 in the nation in the number of people with developmental disabilities who received supported employment to work per 100,000 of the state population.¹ In the past two years, the numbers of individuals with developmental disabilities employed in competitive jobs have continued to increase.

Adults with Significant Mental Illness

DVR has also worked closely with DMH to support the integration of employment into the broad array of clinical mental health services available to individuals with significant mental health issues. Similar to its relationship with DDAS, DVR funding is blended with DMH capitated Medicaid to provide a seamless structure of upfront and ongoing support. DVR funds are specifically allocated to provide assessment, training, and placement services until closure, with the DMH capitated Medicaid funds providing the necessary long-term follow-up.

The collaboration between DVR and DMH has resulted in higher employment rates. In 2002, the Vermont Performance Indicator Project noted that the employment rate for individuals who received VR services combined with mental health services (through DMH) was more than twice the rate of individuals who only received mental health services.²

DVR and DMH have also worked closely to support evidence based supported employment. Vermont was the first state to pilot a Johnson and Johnson-Dartmouth initiative, now in 10 states, which continues to demonstrate that adherence to the principles of evidence based supported employment are key to increasing employment rates.

Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Disturbances

The JOBS Program is an innovative supported employment and intensive case management service for youth with emotional and behavioral disturbances (EBD) that uses work as a means to reach this challenging population. As a result of a unique partnership between the Department of Mental Health's Child, Adolescent and Family Unit (CAFU), the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Corrections, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and contract agencies, the JOBS Program is operational in ten (10) sites across the state.

JOBS involves employers and the business community in meeting the needs of youth through intensive job development, placement, and on and off-site training support. JOBS differs from other traditional employment models by providing intensive case management services to assist in meeting other areas of need in a young person's life, e.g., dealing with legal issues, homelessness, drug/alcohol abuse, and probation and parole.

Within this model, DVR funds are used to provide the employment focus and upfront employment assessment, training, and placement services, while the case management and ongoing support is provided through state general funds (contributed by the different state departments noted above) which are matched to Medicaid through a fee-for-service arrangement with the CAFU in DMH.

The program continues to be very successful. Out of the 243 youth served by the JOBS Program in 2006, 72% were employed, 66% had a reduction in corrections involvement, and 61% received a High School Diploma or GED.

Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury

DVR also works with the Division of Disability and Aging Services (DDAS) to provide seamless employment support to individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury. Similar to the collaboration that serves individuals with developmental disabilities, the DVR funds are used for the up-front assessment, training, and placement services, while individual Medicaid waiver funds are used to provide the ongoing support.

Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired

Because of the multiple barriers that some consumers who are blind or visually impaired face, the DVR Supported Employment Coordinator helps to determine the most appropriate community provider for those with multiple disabilities. A general DVR counselor may be the more appropriate agency for consumers in cases where multiple disabilities are present. This coordinator, with extensive knowledge of statewide resources, particularly in areas of psychiatric and developmental disability services, can provide technical assistance and the ability to provide to DBVI staff and consumers the best combination of resources.