

ANNUAL REPORT
NEVADA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNCIL
FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2001

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, states are entrusted with the establishment of a State Rehabilitation Council (in Nevada termed the Vocational Rehabilitation Council, or VRC), which works both as a partner with and as an advisor to publicly funded vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs. In Nevada, services are coordinated by the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) and the Bureau of Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired (BSBVI).

As further stated in the Final Rule (*Federal Register*, January 17, 2001), the Council is to prepare and submit an annual report after the close of each federal fiscal year. The report will address the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within the State and will be available to the public through appropriate modes of communication. To that end, the balance of this report is written, with attention focused on BVR and BSBVI.

II. VISION AND GOALS OF THE VRC

Nevada's VRC envisions itself as a source of policy and philosophical direction for the primary service providers of employment-related disability services in Nevada. To this end, the Council has adopted two broad work functions, which tend to converge with Council functions in the Rule:

Advocacy & Marketing. This function recognizes the need for adequate financial and staff resources to meet the needs of consumers and employers, to have increased influence, and to enhance cohesion, development and planning in the VRC itself. Such resources also are necessary to pursue a positive and activist partnership with the Nevada Rehabilitation Division and with other councils in order to improve services to people with disabilities served by the Division.

Oversight. The provision of oversight and direction to the VR programs seeks to ensure client/consumer satisfaction, effectiveness and efficiency of the VR programs, guidance regarding the use and allocation of vocational rehabilitation staff and financial resources, and efficacy of the State Plan.

III. VRC STRATEGIC PLAN

The table on the next two pages outlines the Council's Strategic Plan which, though based on federal regulations, is consistent with the Council's vision and the functional goals it has identified for itself over the past three years.

**NEVADA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNCIL
2001-2002 MASTER PLAN**

FUNCTIONS	SCOPE OF WORK	STAFF ROLE	COUNCIL ROLE	TIMELINE
1. Review, analyze & advise the Division about its performance related to eligibility, services & employment outcomes.	Written and verbal performance reports on standards and performance indicators	Bureau Chiefs prepare and Council liaison distributes	Review and discuss	Quarterly
2. Develop, agree to, and review goals & priorities in the State Plan.	Division & Council jointly discuss goals & priorities and develop initiatives in State Plan	Present Division's goals and priorities and prepare a written summary.	Help to develop & initiate ideas to include in State Plan, and provide input	Annually
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation programs and submit reports of progress.	Joint report with Division	Council & Division decide on content. Division staff draft & submit the report	Review of draft	Annually in June
4. Advise DETR and Division regarding VR activities.	Joint discussion with DETR, Division, Council	Staff updates Council at VRC meetings	Provide input to DETR and to Division reports	Ongoing
5. Review & analyze the effectiveness of, & consumer satisfaction with: DETR functions; VR clients visited (one-stops & ESD); VR services the Division provided; other public/private entities; employment & benefits outcomes	Needs assessment/satisfaction surveys and reports.	Bureau of Research & Analysis conducts survey and delivers written and oral report to the Council	Council chooses type of survey process and reviews survey findings	Annually, to the extent feasible
6. Prepare & submit an annual report on the status of the vocational rehabilitation programs to Nevada Governor	As stated in function	Prepares written report	Provide guidance, comments, and approval of report	After end of each federal fiscal year

and to the Secretary of Education				
FUNCTIONS	SCOPE OF WORK	STAFF	COUNCIL	TIMELINE
7. Coordinate and establish working relationships with other Councils:	Representation at meetings	Staff liaison advises VRC members of meetings	Coordination of activities through designated representatives	Ongoing
a. State Independent Living Council (SILC) and independent living centers	Same	Same	Same	Same
b. Advisory panel for IDEA	Same	Same	Same	Same
c. Developmental Disabilities Council	Same	Same	Same	Same
d. Mental Health Planning Council	Same	Same	Same	Same
e. State Workforce Investment Board	Same	Same	Same	Same
8. Perform such other functions consistent with VR regulations, comparable with other Council functions and determined to be appropriate.	As identified	Support for functions	Identify other functions	Ongoing

In the year to which this annual report pertains, the Council operated within the context of its vision and goals developed in a Master Plan. It consists of work functions, responsible parties, and timelines as identified in the table and, to a small extent, other state or local projects that complement the federally-defined work paradigm. This annual report gives attention to the agencies with which it has had direct interaction: the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Bureau of Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired.

IV. ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE OF VR PROGRAMS

A. Service Satisfaction. Results from a 2001 statewide needs assessment/satisfaction survey identified needs and the level of satisfaction of employers, consumers and job developers with the VR programs. The level of satisfaction was generally positive, but areas for improvement were noted. As a result, the Vocational Rehabilitation Council raised questions in regard to the way that past needs assessment/satisfaction surveys have been prepared, carried out, and their findings. The following observations and recommendations were made to help direct the 2002 assessment/survey.

1. The Council and VR programs need to clearly establish the survey's objectives. What is it to accomplish? For example, is it to learn how to improve service? When the objectives are agreed to, identify and work with an entity that capable of generating the questions to address those objectives.
2. Inquire of the assisting entity "what are the strengths of, and limits of, what can be accomplished and understood from the survey."
3. If questions need to be asked to meet or answer federal requirements, ensure that those questions are included in the survey(s).
4. Strive for questions that, with their results, can be comparable from survey to survey.
5. Questions should be developed by a group.
6. For consumers, differentiate the responses for those served by BSBVI and by BVR. Also differentiate by region in the state and by their status (open and in plan, closed successfully, and closed unsuccessfully).
7. When businesses are interviewed, ask for the individual best qualified to respond and identify the work position or title of the person interviewed.
8. For business interviews (if they become a goal of the survey), select some randomly but others that are familiar with the VR programs. Results should be tracked separately for those familiar with VR programs and for those not familiar with the VR programs.
9. Consider using focus groups as one type of interview.
10. If the client respondent acknowledges having received or used service, have a follow-up question with a scale that allows the respondent to rate the service.
11. When rating scales are used, 5 to 7 choices of response are advisable.

12. Consider using pre-tests. Or, consider the use of a “control group” to test the reliability of results compared to the non-control group.
13. For reliability, consider “cross-sectional” questions, i.e., ones which ask the same person in a different way to learn if the same results are generated.

When the survey results are presented to the Council, re-state the objectives of the survey to refresh the Council’s memory.

B. Successful vs. Unsuccessful Case Closures. The Council wanted to know reasons for the high percentage of unsuccessful case closures and asked for a higher success rate in placement.

C. Client Assessments. The Council recommends to the VR programs that assessments of a client’s vocational rehabilitation needs address the unique needs of the individual client. Moreover, such assessments should include ALL vocational rehabilitation needs, whether they be fulfilled by the VR program, coordinated by the VR program, or whether arranged by the client or others.

D. Transition Cases. The Council in 2001 reaffirmed its desire for improvements in transition services for high school students. In June 2000, the Council heard that many disabled students receive no employment-related experience until the senior year. It should begin earlier. VR has a large part to play because it understands the relationship between people with disabilities and employment. Transition training should address inter-personal skills, time management skills, and more, to help prepare people for employment and/or further education. Parents should know about employment opportunities, about agencies that serve children, and about summer programs to help prepare students for employment.

At its September 2000 two-day training, and at several regular meetings, including that of November 2001, the Council discussed and reiterated its strong support for transition programs, be they for school students or non-school individuals. The Council made specific reference to the adequacy of transition counselors in Clark County (greater Las Vegas). For example, three counselors are assigned to the schools. However, the view of the Council and its Nevada PEP (Parents Educating Parents) representative is that each year there is a rapid growth in student population and number of schools to be served. This means that less time is available per transition student. Moreover, only senior-year students receive attention. The Council believes that there is a need to begin service at least in the junior year. Moreover, to receive transition services, individuals do not have to be enrolled in schools.

E. Funding of the VR Programs. The Council has been concerned about the adequacy of funding for Nevada’s vocational rehabilitation programs. Per counselor caseloads have been high and projections are for an increase in clients by about 4% to

5% per year during the current decade. These percentages could be substantially higher if the VR programs are marketed to identify and qualify unserved or underserved individuals. Staff turnover and increased paperwork also impede a higher quality of service. The Council has recommended new rehabilitation counselor positions for the last several years. The Council makes the same recommendation to the Division and State Legislature. It is apparent to the Council that Nevada's VR programs could be more effective if professional staff were more "plentiful" and had more case service dollars at their disposal. When the percentage increase in consumers who enter an individualized plan of employment exceeds the percentage increase in funding from state and federal sources, both counseling time and financial support available to consumers are pinched.

F. Other Council Concerns.

1. In reviewing the 2001 needs assessment/satisfaction survey and open-ended comments that were received, the Council discussed the potential need for an improved "human element" in the VR process.
2. The co-location of VR offices with other members of the Workforce Investment Act team was discussed. Informal input from most VR offices indicated increased cooperation between agencies. Moreover, 61% (22 of 36) of job developers, who are not employed directly by the VR programs, used Employment Security Division staff or resources to help with job placement assistance. A small number of the job developers alleged that they encountered some unidentified barriers when attempting to use ESD resources or staff. However, there was neither detail nor opportunity to explain them.
3. The Council recommended that the BSBVI expand its offices to include the City of Henderson. The Division agreed, but it was not accomplished, due to a staff vacancy and the lack of space for a BSBVI staff member.
4. The Council recommended that client financial participation requirements needed flexibility. With Council member participation, the requirements were changed so that they reflected current income rather than the previous calendar year's income. The Council and Division agreed also that the introduction of the requirements be removed from the application process and handled as a part of IPE co-development.

V. COUNCIL INITIATIVES AND OUTREACH

A. Parents, Teachers & Students. In 2000, a Council committee was created to work in tandem with another entity, such as the PTA, to link parents, teachers, students and VR. The purpose was to improve communication and understanding regarding transition issues. This committee is still in its formative stage.

B. Trade Shows & Job Fairs. A Council recommendation made at Council meetings is that the Division increase its attendance at trade shows and job fairs in order to increase the visibility of the VR program. The Council is interested in knowing if there has been such an increase and if there were any results, such as the stimulation of new clients for services and increased employer interest in the VR programs.

C. Cooperation. Another Council suggestion included discussion of cooperation between administrators of government organizations that provide services to individuals, so that the differing agencies could come to a better understanding of the mission of each. The Council is interested in knowing if such cooperation has been advanced and examples of how this may have happened or may be in progress, taking the agreement between the VR programs and State Department of Education, as an example.

D. Website. A fourth outreach activity discussed, but not yet realized, is the development of a one-stop Website of programs and agencies in Nevada for individuals with disabilities. A fundamental problem yet to be resolved is whether the Council's budget can sustain the startup and maintenance of the Website.

E. Promotional Brochure. During the year a brochure on the VR programs, developed for marketing to businesses, was completed. A copy of it is attached to this annual report.

F. CD Promotion. Some progress was made on the scripting and other work associated with a CD-ROM, concerning the nature of the VR program. Work on the project was interrupted by departure from the Council of the project's lead member. The principal intention is for the video to be used to market to employers that the VR programs have job-ready clients. The video also is perceived as useful to parents groups, to transition education settings, to job fairs or trade shows, to state meetings or conferences, and so on. The proposed CD is to include information about the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities.

VI. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Consistent with federal regulations, the Vocational Rehabilitation Council has made regular efforts toward partnering with the designated State unit. For example, prior to full Council consideration of changes to the Client Services Policy and Procedures Manual and to the State Plan, Council representatives have been involved in discussions leading to proposed changes. Moreover, the Council has undertaken efforts to promote the vocational rehabilitation program, such as production of a brochure aimed toward employers, investigation into a video/CD similarly geared toward employers, and production of an ADA brochure that addresses Title I (employment) and the other

titles. A Council committee also continues to explore the feasibility of a statewide Website regarding services for disabled individuals, including institutions associated with employment. The Council also has been centrally involved in triennial needs assessments and in employer and consumer satisfaction surveys with VR services, spending a share of its budget on these surveys. Another example is that the Council invited constructive review from entities outside the Rehabilitation Division about satisfaction survey objectives, design, goals and interpretation of results. Partnering also is demonstrated by the Division's invitation to VRC members to attend a number of trainings for VR program staff.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Council has attempted to coordinate activities with those of other councils within the State of Nevada. As a standing item, the VRC has on its meeting agenda reports by the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), Developmental Disabilities Council, Workforce Investment Board, State Department of Education-IDEA, mental health advisory agencies and, on occasion, the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. The latter entity has cooperated with the VRC on two of the promotional efforts identified above.

During the legislative session, Council members were kept apprised of and were encouraged to support proposed legislation impacting on some of these programs. From information the VR Council liaison receives from Rehabnet, the *Federal Register* and other sources, he informs the SILC, the Developmental Disabilities Council, assistive technology, and other programs of potential trainings, grant opportunities, meetings, etc.

VII CONCLUSION

This Vocational Rehabilitation Council annual report gives attention to recent or potential performance of the Nevada Rehabilitation Division's vocational rehabilitation programs, namely the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Bureau of Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired. Based on the statistical and qualitative data available for Council review, the programs generally appear to perform well, based on federal and state standards. There are areas of concern and areas in which improvement can be made, however, which have been addressed in this report.

The Council herein submits this report to the Governor of Nevada, Kenny Guinn, to the Rehabilitation Services Administration, to the Nevada Rehabilitation Division, and to the State's public archives for review and filing consistent with federal and state rules and procedures. Comments may be submitted to the Vocational Rehabilitation Council's staff liaison, c/o Nevada Rehabilitation Division, 505 E. King Street, Room 502, Carson City, Nevada 89701-3704.