

ARKANSAS REGISTER

Transmittal Sheet

* Use only for **FINAL** and **EMERGENCY RULES**



Secretary of State
Mark Martin
State Capitol, Suite 026
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201-1094
(501) 682-3527
www.sos.arkansas.gov



For Office
Use Only:

Effective Date _____ Code Number _____

Name of Agency DHS Division of Services for the Blind

Department Human Services

Contact Cassandra Williams E-mail cassandra.williams@dhs.arkans Phone 501-682-0361

Statutory Authority for Promulgating Rules Arkansas Act 481 of 1983, codified as ACA-25-10-201 et seq

Rule Title: 2015 Vocational Rehabilitation Plan

Intended Effective Date
(Check One)

Date

Emergency (ACA 25-15-204)

Legal Notice Published

11-19-14

30 Days After Filing (ACA 25-15-204)

Final Date for Public Comment

12-18-14

Other _____
(Must be more than 30 days after filing date.)

Reviewed by Legislative Council

TBA

Adopted by State Agency

11-19-14

Electronic Copy of Rule submitted under ACA 25-15-218 by:

Christy Lamas christy.lamas@dhs.arkansas.gov 11-13-14

Contact Person

E-mail Address

Date

CERTIFICATION OF AUTHORIZED OFFICER

I Hereby Certify That The Attached Rules Were Adopted
In Compliance with Act 434 of 1967 the Arkansas Administrative Procedures Act. (ACA 25-15-201 et. seq.)

Cassandra Williams for Katy Morris
Signature

501-682-0360

katy.morris@dhs.arkansas.gov

Phone Number

E-mail Address

Division of Services for the Blind Director

Title

5/28/15

Date

FY 2015 State Plan Required Attachments

Cooperation with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities under the Statewide Workforce Investment System {Attachment 4.8(b) (1)}

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce investment system with respect to:

- Federal, state, and local agencies and programs;
- if applicable, Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture; and
- if applicable, state use contracting programs.

The Department of Human Services Division of State Services for the Blind (DSB) has cooperative agreements with the following agencies not carrying out activities under the statewide Workforce Investment system:

- Arkansas Educational Television Network
- Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- 33 Institutions of Higher Education
- Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education
- Educational Services for the Visually Impaired
- DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services
- DHS Division of Behavioral Health
- DHS Division of Children and Family Services
- DHS Division of County Operations
- DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services
- DHS Division of Community Service and Nonprofit Support
- DHS Division of Youth Services

Coordination with DHS

Co-location - DSB serves all 75 counties in Arkansas, and VR counselors have base offices in DHS offices in 10 geographic locations around the state. Referrals may be made directly to the appropriate DSB field office serving the individual's community or through the DSB Central Office.

Leadership Training - DSB coordinates with other DHS Divisions by, including but not limited to, participating in “Leadership in a High Performance Culture” workshops and other training for managers and supervisors.

Mental Health – DSB coordinates with the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services, the DHS Division of Medical Services, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and sends a representative to meetings of the Arkansas Children’s Behavioral Health Care Commission.

Access – The State Rehabilitation Technologist participates in the Accessibility Work Group which meets monthly to discuss accessibility issues with websites and software applications used by state employees. The group is comprised of technology staff from each of the DHS divisions.

The DSB Business and Technology Unit continues to coordinate with the DHS Office of Systems and Technology to ensure its Data Loss Protection (DLP) project does not take any action that would affect access to adaptive software and accommodations by DHS employees who are blind or visually impaired.

The DSB Business and Technology Unit has tested accessibility on the AWARE data management system project, Office 365, and 508 Enhancements, a national project that will assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired in using Microsoft Share products. DSB has a DHS Share account and expects the 508 Enhancements project to benefit its employees who are blind or visually impaired. The State Rehabilitation Technologist has been involved in testing some Google mail and Google apps, working with some other states that are migrating to put their emails out on the Google system. DSB will be using an internal Office 365 cloud program through DHS.

Assistive Technology Coordination

Assessments for assistive technology are done by the DSB Business and Technology Unit, which has trained Rehabilitation Teachers to install computer equipment and perform other technology-related tasks, so that they can provide basic technology support to consumers in their respective geographic areas statewide. This initiative also expanded the capacity of the DSB Business and Technology Unit.

Taking this initiative a step further, last year DSB started a project with World Services for the Blind to train Rehabilitation Teachers on the use of assistive technology devices and how to provide assistive technology instruction to consumers in their local areas. The initial venture was a success and is being continued and expanded to include other field staff in the training.

In April 2014, DSB started business partnerships to have vendors train counselors and rehabilitation teachers about new assistive technology.

DSB is among the agencies and organizations tasked with implementing the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act in Arkansas. Its partner World Services for the Blind has been designated to distribute technology equipment under the federal legislation. Through the Act, consumers will be exposed to more technology available to assist them in their daily lives, job searches and workplaces.

DSB continues to collaborate with the Arkansas Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (ALBPH) and maintains a number of digital recorders to be used by staff to teach consumers how to access digital talking books, both by standard mail distribution and through the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) website. Additionally, available technology services can be offered and augmented by DSB's technology staff and lab.

Coordination of Deaf-blind Services

Each year DSB coordinates with the Governor's Office, the Department of Education, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Office of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and related consumer groups to proclaim and celebrate the last week of June as Helen Keller Deaf-blind Awareness Week and observe her birthdate June 27. A deaf-blind consumer is chosen to accept the proclamation from the Governor at the State Capitol.

DSB has a cooperative agreement with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to have dual caseloads in regard to consumers who are deaf-blind. DSB provides blindness services and ARS addresses deafness needs.

Coordination with United States Department of Agriculture

DSB refers consumers to commodity programs and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which are under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Outreach Efforts

In addition to contracting with Centers for Independent Living (CILs) to reach out to faith-based groups, DSB continues its efforts to increase VR awareness and referrals from faith-based groups, minority organizations and the general public:

- In southeast Arkansas, DSB participated in the Dumas Mini Health Fair and made presentations at Drew County Memorial Hospital, the Jefferson County Diabetes Support Group, the Dallas County Diabetes Support Group, and the Jefferson Regional Medical Center's Diabetes Resource Center. DSB participated in the Jefferson County Transition Fair and visited high schools in Watson Chapel, Monticello, and McGehee. DSB did faith-based outreach at the First Assembly of God Church and the Christian Outreach Ministries, both in Pine Bluff. DSB did minority outreach at Charro's Mexican restaurant and the Lil Steakhouse, both in Pine Bluff. Staff distributed information at Contact Lens

Express, Curves fitness center, the Professional Imaging Center, the Fordyce Civic Center, the Pine Bluff Public Library, and the Dewitt Public Library. DSB networked with Delta Resource CIL. This southeast Arkansas area is in the lower Delta and has a high minority population.

- In northwest Arkansas, DSB participated in transition fairs at high schools in Springdale and Greenwood and visited other schools in the area. DSB participated in a job fair at Harrison, the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville Job Fair, the Serco Job Fair at the Non-Profit Center in Rogers, the Northwest Arkansas Job Fair in Rogers, and Goodwill Industries of Arkansas Job Fairs in Springdale, Fayetteville, and Siloam Springs. DSB had an exhibit booth at the Searcy County Health and Safety Fair in Marshall. DSB staff attended monthly meetings of the VIP Support Group and the Ozark Support Group. Staff visited four eye clinics in the area. In faith-based efforts, DSB made a presentation at the Women's Missions Union at the Antioch Baptist Church in Flippin. DSB presented information to the Searcy County Historical Society, Blue Cliff College, Northwest Technical Institute, and both the Disability Program and Admissions Offices of Northwest Arkansas Community College.
- In northeast Arkansas, DSB participated in the Career Expo at Arkansas State University, the Career Fair at Goodwill Industries in Batesville, and a job fair at the University of Arkansas Community College of Batesville (UACCB). Faith-based outreach efforts were made with Nettleton Baptist Church of Jonesboro, the Faith-based Mission of Marked Tree, the Restoration House, Quail Valley Church of Christ in Batesville, the Downtown Church of Christ in Heber Springs, New Liberty Baptist Church of Pangburn, Veterans Outreach Ministries in Pleasant Plains, and the Church of God and White Water Baptist Church, both of Mountain View. DSB distributed information about its services at the Conway Human Development Center Health Fair, and staff attended monthly seminars at White River Medical Center. Outreach efforts such as the distribution of brochures and the posting of fliers continue to be made at the Ozark Folk Center, Blanchard Springs Caverns State Park, farm-related businesses, banks, eye clinics, computer stores, grocery stores, gas stations, convenience stores, DHS offices, pharmacies, and other businesses. A newsletter is sent to area consumers. DSB is working with a local non-profit television station in Melbourne regarding publicity. Staff made presentations at the Access Arkansas Processing Center and at the Clinton Chamber of Commerce Fundraiser.
- In central Arkansas, VR Counselors made presentations and left brochures at doctors' clinics, DHS offices, and schools. DSB had booths at the Conway Job Fair and the Transition Fair at the Russellville High School. Presentations were made at the Russellville Lions Club, Little Rock Founders Lions Club and the Arkansas Lions' Mid-Winter conference. Staff gave information about DSB services to 24 employers at the Little Rock Job Fair and to a meeting of the West Central Workforce Board Committee on One-Stop Operators. Staff attended the open house at Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind and toured the Little Rock Job

Corps facilities and Goodwill Industries of Arkansas. As part of the 2014 Jump Start educational activities, DSB took students to both the Heifer International Headquarters and the Heifer International Farm. Heifer International is a non-profit which provides livestock to impoverished families and teaches them sustainable agricultural practices. Jump Start students also toured the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, which focuses on Arkansas's African-American history and culture. DSB staff are made aware that referrals can be made as needed to Laity Involved in Free Transportation (LIFT), a volunteer program through the First United Methodist Church of Little Rock, which provides free transportation services to individuals in Little Rock and North Little Rock who have no other means of transportation to doctor appointments and medical treatments.

- In southwest Arkansas, outreach efforts included participation in the "Healthy Arkansas" health awareness event in Magnolia, the annual Woodmen of the World luncheon, a class on sensory awareness, the Ouachita County Health Fair, the Assistive Technology Show at Camden Fairview School District, the Delta Omega Omega Women's Health Fair, and the Transition Job Fair at Crossett High School. Presentations were made at the Camden Lions Club, the AAA Driver Improvement Program, and the DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services. Staff participated in the Texas-Arkansas Bi-State Coalition meetings and assisted in the planning of its annual conference. Staff participated in the meetings of the Small Business Development group and the Adult Education Advisory Board. Staff attended the National Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns Conference. Faith-based efforts continue with the Camden Community Brotherhood, Ouachita District Laymen, the United Methodist Men, and the Inter-faith Medical Clinic. Minority outreach efforts continue with the Ouachita County Economic Development Council, Men's Health Outreach, Camden Accelerated Business Services, the Esquire Scholarship Dinner, Macedonia Men's Health Fair, and Camden Chamber of Commerce's "Business After Dark" annual networking event.

Emergency Preparedness Collaborations

DSB collaborates with organizations charged with developing strategic plans for emergency preparedness; response and recovery; and maintenance of services in the aftermath of a disaster.

DSB was involved in the initial development of the DHS Business Continuity and Contingency Plan (BCCP), which addresses continued operations in the event of a disaster. DSB reviews the BCCP annually and updates the agency's part of the plan as needed.

DSB's Staff Development Coordinator has some disaster preparedness experience related to military service and meets with Arkansas Department of Emergency Management

(ADEM) as part of the efforts of the statewide Disaster Preparedness Committee for Persons with Disabilities.

Coordination with Blind Agencies/Organizations

DSB collaborates with the following organizations, agencies, and non-profits through their participation on the DSB board and in the day-to-day provision of services to consumers: the Arkansas Lions; Arkansas Affiliate National Federation of the Blind (NFB); Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER); World Services for the Blind (WSB); Arkansas Association of Blind Business Enterprise Managers; the Blinded Veterans Association; Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI); and the Arkansas Chapter American Council of the Blind (ACB). The Disability Rights Center (DRC) and the Arkansas Independent Living Council (AIRC) are routinely scheduled for presentations at each board meeting. Time is also scheduled every quarter for consumer input during DSB board meetings.

The DSB Director is a member of the AIRC and Workforce Services boards. DSB staff and DSB Board members attend ACB, NFB, WSB, and AER local, state and/or national activities/events. DSB representatives are frequently asked to be presenters at these organizations' annual state conferences, and representatives from these organizations are frequently invited to be presenters at DSB meetings and conferences. Some DSB staff are members of these organizations. VR Counselors participate in staffings regarding their consumers at WSB. Arkansas Lions Clubs assist DSB with local presentations for the annual area Consumer of the Year (COY) awards. In areas where there are no Lions Clubs, DSB coordinates COY presentations with Kiwanis, Rotary, or Chambers of Commerce. DSB continues to work closely with consumer groups.

DSB is coordinating a White Cane Safety Day planning committee to plan an observance event for October 2014. The committee includes representatives from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Department of Counseling, Adult Education, and Rehabilitation Education; Educational Services for the Visually Impaired; WSB; Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind; Arkansas Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped; Arkansas Lions Eye Bank and Laboratory; NFB; Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System; Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired; Arkansas Lions; ACB; and AER.

The White Cane Safety Day event DSB coordinated in October 2013 drew about 200 people from across the state. The DSB Director spoke about the history and importance of the white cane. Children from the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired gave a mobility demonstration. Cane-using representatives of Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind, the National Federation of the Blind Arkansas Affiliate, the American Council of the Blind Arkansas Affiliate, World Services for the Blind, and DSB spoke about the difference the white cane had made in their lives and their independence. The event was part of October's Blindness Awareness Month. The Governor's Office issued a proclamation proclaiming October 15 as White Cane Safety Day.

Support Groups

DSB staff are knowledgeable about support groups, which are located around the state in El Dorado, Fayetteville, Hot Springs, Jonesboro, Little Rock, Mountain Home, Ozark, Paragould, Pine Bluff, Springdale, Harrison, and Texarkana. Rehabilitation Teachers are available to speak to support groups on vocational topics.

CILs and Other Providers

DSB pays WSB and the Louisiana Center for the Blind on a “fee for services” case-by-case basis. DSB continues its agreement with World Services for the Blind and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind to provide SE services, training, and placement through the jointly-developed Vocational Assistance Under Long Term (VAULT) program. WSB continues to provide assessments, skills training, and training to family members and significant others on issues related to blindness, including IL skills and overcoming barriers to employment. The Lighthouse and/or other SE vendors will provide direct job placement and job coaching. In March 2014, a summit for family members and significant others was held at WSB, and DSB staff were on-hand to assist.

DSB continues to issue RFQ’s each year in an effort to contract with Centers for Independent Living and faith-based groups to provide VR information to churches and other faith-based groups. DSB continues to work with all of the four CIL’s, including those who choose not to participate in the contract system.

Coordination with Education-related Partners

In June, 2014, DSB conducted Jump Start, a statewide career development program for high school students who are blind or severely visually impaired. Twenty-one students from across the state were accepted into the program. DSB coordinates with the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI) in the planning and operation of Jump Start. ASBVI holds its summer learning program for youth under age 14 at the same time that DSB has Jump Start, so the two agencies share cafeteria staff, infirmary nurses, and security guards, and at least one ASBVI staff member is assigned to assist during Jump Start. DSB houses the students at ASBVI during the week (students go home on weekends). The three-week program is designed to expose Jump Start students to the world of work and assist them in transitioning from high school to employment or post-secondary education. Students are placed in part-time jobs appropriate for their skills, abilities, and interests. They go to work in the mornings and in the afternoons and evenings participate in educational and recreational activities. Students learn independent living and job readiness skills; computer technology; and, if needed, orientation and mobility skills. Jump Start increases the students’ confidence, social skills, and self-esteem. It also strengthens DSB’s relationship with ASBVI.

DSB continues to coordinate services with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired. DSB includes ESVI as an integral partner in Parent Summits for students who

are blind or visually impaired and their families. Parents learn information aimed to ease their concerns about students transitioning from high school to college; the educational rights of students who are blind or visually impaired; and the resources and services available to them.

Relationships with ESVI are also strengthened by outreach and coordination initiatives that consist of sending information by mail and email to ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants at least twice a year, in the fall and winter months. VR Counselors and their assistants serve as agency contacts.

DSB is a charter member in the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), which coordinates transition services and discusses related issues. AITP has representatives from 26 agencies and organizations, including, but not limited to Arkansas Transition Services (ATS), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Disability Services (DDS), DSB, parent centers, the private sector, and public and private schools. AITP involves transition agencies and organizations at a state level through quarterly meetings and shares information through its website. AITP will hold a Summer Agency Connections conference on June 25, in Little Rock and is sponsoring a Transition Summit October 22-23, in Hot Springs. DSB plans to send representatives to these conferences.

As a part of AITP at the local level, DSB is reaching out to each Local Education Area Supervisor in the school districts across the State to strengthen the relationship between the Department of Special Education and DSB.

Each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and regularly sends information by mail and email to contacts on the list. VR Counselors and their assistants serve as agency contacts. This process gives schools a pathway for increased communications with DSB.

The DSB Director, the Staff Development Coordinator, and an Area Supervisor meet annually with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Advisory Board to ensure that DSB is involved with their planning for higher education needs.

Business Partnership Development

DSB continues its participation in the Regional VR Business Network (ReVrb), a group established by the Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center to work on particular issues between vocational rehabilitation and business.

Crime Victims

DSB is actively involved in the Crime Victims with Disabilities Council, a subset of Partners for Inclusive Communities-University of Arkansas Medical Sciences.

Additional Information: Cooperation with Agencies within the Statewide Workforce Investment System

DSB has cooperative agreements with local Workforce Investment Boards, which are updated as necessary. DSB also has cooperative agreements with the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (a general agreement and a deafblind agreement).

DSB, ARS, the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS), and the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), Special Education Unit (SEU), Transition Unit are partners in a cooperative agreement outlining responsibilities and the provision of services, including supported employment, to transition-aged consumers.

Through the Governor's Executive Order 10-17, DSB coordinates with Workforce and other state agencies to increase employment of Arkansans with disabilities. The order also aims to focus consumer services first toward the goal of self-sufficiency through employment.

The DSB Director serves on the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, which meets quarterly, and VR Counselors are members of the local Workforce Investment Boards, which meet quarterly across the state.

DSB continues to support its 17 accessible kiosks for consumers at Workforce Center locations. The original 10 kiosks were placed in the same cities where DSB has offices; the second set of seven kiosks were placed in cities with either two-year or four-year Institutions of Higher Education. The kiosks provide consumers the same access to the Internet to search for jobs as a sighted person seeking services from Workforce.

Coordination with Education Officials **{Attachment 4.8(b) (2)}**

- Describe the designated state unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including provisions for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or, if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection, before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting.

- Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency with respect to
 - consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;
 - transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs;
 - roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
 - procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

DSB has a cooperative agreement with the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education, regarding transition services to students who are blind or severely visually impaired and are in public schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI). The interagency agreement with the Department of Education outlines the roles and responsibilities, financial responsibility, determination of lead agency, and qualified personnel.

DSB also has cooperative agreements with:

- Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Arkansas School for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired
- Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI)
- 33 Institutions of Higher Education

DSB counselors assist consumers in developing Individual Plans for Employment (IPE's) before students determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leave the school setting.

In regard to the development and approval of IPE's, all DSB consumers, including transition students, receive services based upon their IPE. The counselor and the consumer and/or a representative, as appropriate, develop the IPE jointly and mutually approve its contents. The IPE must be designed to achieve the specific employment outcome chosen by the individual and be consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests, and

informed choice. The services, service providers, and all activities selected by the consumer must be necessary to meet the employment outcome goal. The VR Counselor communicates with the consumer and other service providers, such as ARS, to avoid duplication of services and to ensure consideration of comparable benefits, where applicable.

DSB is a charter member in the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), which coordinates transition services and discusses related issues. AITP has representatives from 26 agencies and organizations, including, but not limited to Arkansas Transition Services (ATS), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Disability Services (DDS), DSB, parent centers, the private sector, and public and private schools. AITP involves transition agencies and organizations at a state level through quarterly meetings and shares information through its website. AITP will hold a Summer Agency Connections conference on June 25, in Little Rock and is sponsoring a Transition Summit October 22-23, in Hot Springs. DSB plans to send representatives to these conferences.

As a part of AITP at the local level, DSB is reaching out to each Local Education Area Supervisor in the school districts across the State to strengthen the relationship between the Department of Special Education and DSB.

Secondary schools invite DSB to Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings to be part of the planning team to assist education agencies in preparing students who are blind or severely visually impaired for transition from school to post-school activities, such as employment, training, supported employment, and other VR services. The IEP outlines the roles and responsibilities of DSB, the student, the school, and any other agency/organization involved in providing transition services.

In June, 2014, DSB conducted Jump Start, a statewide career development program for high school students who are blind or severely visually impaired. Twenty-one students from across the state were accepted into the program. DSB coordinates with the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI) in the planning and operation of Jump Start. ASBVI holds its summer learning program for youth under age 14 at the same time that DSB has Jump Start, so the two agencies share cafeteria staff, infirmary nurses, and security guards, and at least one ASBVI staff member is assigned to assist during Jump Start. DSB houses the students at ASBVI during the week (students go home on weekends). The three-week program is designed to expose Jump Start students to the world of work and assist them in transitioning from high school to employment or post-secondary education. Students are placed in part-time jobs appropriate for their skills, abilities, and interests. They go to work in the mornings and in the afternoons and evenings participate in educational and recreational activities. Students learn independent living and job readiness skills; computer technology; and, if needed, orientation and mobility skills. Jump Start increases the students' confidence, social skills, and self-esteem. It also strengthens DSB's relationship with ASBVI.

DSB sponsored a weekend conference for students who are blind or visually impaired and their families in conjunction with the Southern College of Optometry in Memphis March 21-22, 2014. DSB held a Parent Summit in West Memphis for its consumers the first night. The next day they joined families from three states attending the “Solutions in Sight” Family Day at Southern College of Optometry. They learned information aimed to ease their concerns about students transitioning from high school to college; the educational rights of students who are blind or visually impaired; and the resources and services available to them. DSB provided free lodging and meals and held the event on a Friday-Saturday to enable more families to attend.

DSB continues to participate in the Transition Learning Collaborative (TLC), a group established by the Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center to share information and resources to improve transition at the state level. TACE Center staff researches student data collection and analyzes models used in other states and shares them with the states in the TLC collaborative. The TLC is composed of transition coordinators from both general and blind VR agencies in Region VI. Interaction with other states and TACE increases the resources available to DSB in regard to transition best practices and information. DSB’s transition coordinator participates in monthly TLC teleconferences.

Responsibilities

DSB is both a DSU and a DSA. DSB is also a division within the Department of Human Services. DSB has an RSA-approved agreement with the Department of Education/Special Education, which provides information on financial responsibilities, the lead agency, and qualified personnel.

Outreach Procedures

DSB continues to follow directives to improve communication with schools. Field Services Directive 08-06 was developed for contacting schools and distributing information at least semi-annually. Per the directive, each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and sends letters and information to contacts on the list. In 2011 an email option was added. This process gives schools a pathway for increased communications with DSB.

Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations {Attachment 4.8(b)(3)}

Describe the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

DSB develops agreements in response to: (1) state and federal laws and regulations, (2) results of needs assessments, (3) suggestions from consumer groups, and (4) recommendations of staff and stakeholders including those in the Workforce Services arena. DSB uses the RSA guideline template to develop cooperative agreements.

DSB has been a long-standing partner with the Arkansas Deafblindness Project, formerly known as the Deaf/Blind Consortium. DSB refers consumers to the Deafblindness Project. DSB serves on the Arkansas Advisory Committee for the Deafblindness Project, which provides training for parents and professionals to foster stronger partnerships among agencies who work with this population. The Deafblindness Project maintains a deafblind registry and requests related information from DSB. DSB is an affiliate of the Helen Keller National Center.

DSB continues to issue RFQ's each year in an effort to contract with Centers for Independent Living and faith-based groups to provide VR information to churches and other faith-based groups. DSB continues to work with all of the four CIL's, including those who choose not to participate in the contract system.

DSB operates the Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS), which began as a private non-profit organization and is now part of the state agency. The organization's founders formed Friends of AIRS (FAIRS) to continue its support of the station. DSB leases facilities for AIRS from the Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN), which provides DSB with in-kind services in the form of engineering services and other technology.

Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services {Attachment 4.8(b) (4)}

Describe the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide the following services to individuals with the most significant disabilities:

- supported employment services; and
- extended services.

DSB continues its agreement with World Services for the Blind and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind to provide SE services, training, and placement through the jointly-developed Vocational Assistance Under Long Term (VAULT) program. WSB

continues to provide assessments, skills training, and training to family members and significant others on issues related to blindness, including IL skills and overcoming barriers to employment. The Lighthouse and/or other SE vendors will provide direct job placement and job coaching. In March 2014, a summit for family members and significant others was held at WSB, and DSB staff were on-hand to assist.

In 2015, DSB will earmark a sum of VR funds for an establishment grant to World Services for the Blind in conjunction with Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind to support DSB efforts to expand the capacity of the State of Arkansas to provide supported employment services to individuals in Arkansas who are blind or severely visually impaired.

DSB, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS), and the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), Special Education Unit (SEU), Transition Unit are partners in a cooperative agreement outlining responsibilities and the provision of services, including supported employment, to transition-aged consumers. The agreement produced an interagency steering committee which works on supported employment issues. During its formulation, the steering committee was facilitated by the EmployAbility Project, a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) program that was housed in the DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services.

Through the Governor's Executive Order 10-17, DSB coordinates with other state agencies to increase employment of Arkansans with disabilities. The DSB Director served on a task force that identified policies that created barriers and disincentives for employment of individuals who are disabled and made recommendations to the Governor. The Executive Order called for DHS to convene an Employment First Task Force comprised of disability service providers, consumer advocates, and the state agencies administering disability services, vocational rehabilitation, Workforce services, and education and to focus consumer services first toward the goal of self-sufficiency through employment.

Executive Order 10-17 also calls for the training of staff and counseling of consumers on Social Security work incentives, the Ticket to Work program, and employment and navigation services for individuals with disabilities who want to work. It aims to increase the availability and use of supported employment through interagency collaboration and reallocation of existing funds to better meet the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Extended Services

DSB has contracted with World Services for the Blind and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind to serve as CRPs to provide Supported Employment services.

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

{Attachment 4.10}

The Arkansas Division of State Services for the Blind (DSB) supports a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) as required by Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992. DSB's CSPD Plan is aimed at securing and maintaining an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals to provide rehabilitation services to blind and severely visually impaired individuals. DSB requires VR Counselors to be certified by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) or at minimum be qualified to be certified and working toward certification. DSB requires Rehabilitation Teachers to be certified by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) or at minimum be qualified to be certified and working toward certification. These state standards are consistent with national standards requiring recognized certifications for personnel providing vocational rehabilitation services.

Procedures for evaluating progress

The DSB Staff Development Coordinator, Field Services Administrator, and Area Field Supervisors monitor progress by staff to meet CSPD standards. An employee that declares retirement receives a lower priority in attaining the CSPD standard, but is required to complete a designated course which will increase expertise. Counselors have established timeframes (seven years from date of hire) to meet the requirements or face reclassification and demotion or other measures. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors receive priority in training for CSPD requirements, and Rehabilitation Teachers for the Blind are given second priority. The spring 2013 legislative session gave DSB the authority to pay tuition for its VR Counselors working on their CRCs. DSB is developing legislation to expand this opportunity to Area Field Supervisors, since they are also required to meet certification standards. The next priority will focus upon Rehabilitation Teachers and Rehabilitation Assistants.

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development Qualified Personnel Needs {Attachment 4.10(a) (1)}

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

- the number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to

- the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
- the number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
 - projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

DHS Division of Services for the Blind is dedicated to ensuring an adequate supply of qualified professionals and support staff. DSB has a strong commitment to providing and making available training programs especially for staff that provide direct services to consumers.

Current Staffing Levels

DHS Division of Services for the Blind has sufficient staff on hand to staff the VR Program. DSB works aggressively to fill vacancies promptly. DSB has 13 authorized VR Counselors. Field Services has 36 support staff. In Counseling and Guidance, there are three CRC Counselors and three taking their CRC exam in March 2015. DSB has 30 extra help positions; eight were filled as of the June 2014 DSB Board meeting.

Caseload Data

The 13 VR caseloads had an average caseload of 88 individuals as of October 1, 2013, with a statewide total of 1,148 active cases and a total of 1,690 served during the preceding 12 months.

Projected Number of Replacement Staff in the Next Five Years

DSB anticipates an elevated level of retirement among its experienced staff in the next five years. It is expected that there will be a fairly regular replacement rate for staff during the next five years.

The number of staff on hand as of the June 2014 DSB Board meeting and projected annual number of replacements by category are as follows:

Category	Total Positions Filled	Current Vacancies	Projected Vacancies over the next 5 years
Administrative Staff	13	1	3
Counselor Staff	38	3	2
Staff Supporting Counselor Activities	9	3	0
Other Staff	7	2	0

Personnel Development {Attachment 4.10(a) (2)}

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

- a list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;
- the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

The Staff Development Coordinator maintains contact with the institutions of higher education and gathers data. The Coordinator reports this data to the Field Services Administrator and the Assistant Director. Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals:

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with an Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling. The Masters in Rehabilitation Teaching (MRT) program has been dissolved, but the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) program will continue. Both the RCE and O&M programs are housed in the Counseling, Adult and Rehabilitation Education (CARE) degree Masters of Arts.

The RCE program at UALR has 135 students enrolled. Of these students there are 52 full-time, 83 part-time, 30 who are minorities, and 47 with disabilities. Of the 39 students who graduated in 2013, 15 are employed in state vocational rehabilitation; 10 are in non-profit rehabilitation; three are employed at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program; one is employed in a federal agency working with veterans counseling; two are in a private for-profit rehab setting; four are employed in for-profit or non-profit agencies providing mental health services; and four are employed in substance abuse treatment programs.

The O&M program has a total of 63 students, all enrolled part-time. Of these, five are minorities, 54 are female, nine are male, and five are students with disabilities. Of the eight students who graduated this year, seven are employed by state or private rehabilitation agencies and six of those are employed out of state.

The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling through the Rehabilitation Education and Research Program housed in the Department of Rehabilitation, Human Resources and Communication Disorders. Of the 36 students enrolled, there are 32 full-time students, four part-time students, 11 students that are minorities, 13 males, 26 females, and 19 students with disabilities. Of the 17 graduates, nine are employed in vocational rehabilitation for state and federal agencies, primarily the Veterans Administration; five are employed in private not-for-profits; one is employed in private for-profit rehabilitation; and two are pursuing doctoral degrees.

Arkansas State University (ASU) at Jonesboro offers a Masters Rehabilitation Counseling program, which is housed in the Psychology and Counseling Department. Of the 17 students enrolled, there were 13 full-time, including three with disabilities and four who are minorities, and there were four part-time students, including one with a disability and two who are minorities. In 2013, there were six graduates. Of these, 50% (three) are working in community counseling agencies, one has been accepted into a doctoral program to pursue a PhD in Rehabilitation, one is taking some time off to spend with family, and one is currently looking for work.

DSB has had students enrolled online at the University of North Texas (UNT) through a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) grant that UNT received in 2009 with the agreement that it would fund a limited number of VR Counselors outside of Texas. DSB currently has one VR Counselor in her last semester at UNT.

The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) and Arkansas Tech University (ATU) at Russellville do not offer Master's degree programs in Rehabilitation Services, but do offer Bachelor degree programs in Rehabilitation Science.

Plan for Recruitment Preparation **{Attachment 4.10(b)}**

Describe the development (updated on an annual basis) and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

DSB has cooperative agreements with each of the 33 colleges/universities in Arkansas in order to promote the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education.

To address current needs for qualified personnel, the DHS personnel office posts DSB vacancies on the DHS website, the state employment website arstatejobs.com, the DHS Intranet site, the statewide newspaper, Workforce Services offices, other state agencies, and college and university recruitment bulletins. Recruitment efforts are ongoing to the 15 fully accredited graduate programs within TACE Region VI, including Arkansas colleges and universities in the region and those with a historically predominate minority enrollment. Universities in Arkansas with Rehabilitation Counseling Programs include:

Institution: University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR)

Location: Little Rock

Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling

Institution: University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (UofA)

Location: Fayetteville

Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling and doctoral degrees in Rehabilitation and in Counseling Education

Institution: Arkansas State University (ASU)

Location: Jonesboro

Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling

Institution: University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB)
Location: Pine Bluff
Programs: Bachelor degree in Rehabilitation Science

Institution: Arkansas Tech University (ATU)
Location: Russellville
Programs: Bachelor degree in Rehabilitation Science

Personnel Standards **{Attachment 4.10(c)}**

Describe the state agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

1. standards that are consistent with any national or state-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services; and
2. to the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the State Plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, institutions of higher education, and other public agencies of these steps and the timelines for taking each step.

Be sure to include the following:

- specific strategies for retraining, recruiting, and hiring personnel;

- the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards;
- procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period;
- the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards;
- the identification of a plan for training newly hired personnel who do not meet the established standards to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

The Arkansas Office of Personnel Management (OPM) continues to recommend the minimum qualifications, job descriptions and salary rates for specific classifications, based upon labor market surveys, which are then reviewed and approved by the legislature. The spring 2013 legislative session gave DSB the authority to pay tuition for its VR Counselors working on their CRCs. DSB is exploring ways to assist Area Field Supervisors with the costs of tuition to meet CSPD standards.

Internships are available to students in the rehabilitation programs across the state. In FY 2014, DSB had one intern, a minority female from the Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling program at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, who did her internship in DSB's Little Rock office and was later hired full-time. DSB was the practicum site for one female, minority student from the Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling program at the University at Buffalo The State University of New York in Buffalo, New York who worked in the DSB Batesville office.

DSB recruits, and, to the degree possible, hires counselors with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or other closely related degree. DSB implements individual education plans for existing personnel to be retrained to meet certification standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) and Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). Counselors have seven years to meet CSPD requirements from date of hire.

As of the June 2014 DSB Board meeting, the CSPD status was:

- 1 Program Administrator with CRC
- 3 VR Counselors with CRC
- 3 VR Counselors taking CRC exam March 2015
- 1 VR Counselor with LPC
- 3 currently enrolled in school

- 1 awaiting enrollment fall semester
- 4 Supervisors with CRC

CRC Senior Counselors are mentoring new counselors to comply with RSA's prior approval standards regarding eligibility determination, approval of IPE's, and closure determinations.

Staff Development **{Attachment 4.10(d)}**

Describe the state agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated state unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

1. a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology; and
2. procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

DSB staff must possess specific knowledge concerning the problems of blindness and be allowed the opportunity for career development as related to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services.

DSB actively assesses the training needs of its employees and solicits their input regarding training needs. DSB surveys staff annually to determine the training or resources they require to perform their duties more efficiently and effectively. DSB also uses a state-approved personnel performance evaluation document to review an employee's performance and to identify individual training needs.

Leadership development and capacity-building opportunities are offered through a wide variety of methods:

- The Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center periodically surveys rehabilitation staff regarding training needs and develops courses and conferences based on the results or on requests by DSB and other agencies. In the past year, TACE offered face-to-face trainings and teleconferences on topics including: Writing and Marketing Your Business Plan; All Paths Lead to Adult Life: Important Partnerships and Components of Quality Transition Planning for Students

with Intellectual Disabilities Sessions 1 and 2; Making Ethical Decisions in the Vocational Rehabilitation Process; Psychological Evaluations: Not Just for Eligibility; Using the DSM-5 Assessment Tools and International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) As Training Tools for Rehabilitation Counselors; Therapeutic Interventions with Aggressive Clients; Evaluating Vocational Communication Skills of Persons Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing; Multiculturalism and Disabilities; Using the Updated CRC Code of Ethics to Make Ethical Decisions in Everyday Tasks; Putting Together Your Business's Winning Team; Transition to Success for Individuals with Autism; Using Social Media to Plan Careers and Find Employment; Working with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS); Resources: You Got 'Em, Now Use 'Em; Job Success with Young Adults Diagnosed with DSM 5 Neurodevelopmental Disorders; The Use of Interest Inventories and Other Techniques with People Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Changing Nature of Disability in the 21st Century; The Medical and Psychosocial Aspects of Multiple Sclerosis Parts 1 and 2; Rehabilitation of Persons with Bipolar Disorders; Rehabilitation of Persons with Depressive Disorders; Flipping the Script: Viewing Our Work Through a Social Model Lens; Working With Justice-Involved VR Clients; Using Qualitative Tools in Career Counseling; and Backs in a Flash.

- The Oklahoma and Texas Departments of Rehabilitation Services again gave DSB staff four spots in their leadership training program Wicked Innovation: Next Generation Solutions (WINGS), which was developed in conjunction with TACE.
- The Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE) provides opportunities for DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Teachers to take the Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) exam. Although DSB is eligible, no slots will be used this year due to the distance of exam locations. When the exam was being given in Louisiana in FY 2013, four DSB VRT's took the exam, with three passing and becoming CESP's. This certification falls in line with DSB's training plan.
- In-house training is provided through DSB's Database Administrator, Field Administrator, and other experienced, credentialed professional staff; the DHS Organizational Development and Training Unit; DSB's annual Statewide meeting; the annual Field Services meeting; periodic training meetings; and one-on-one training which is made available to all staff depending upon the need. Information is distributed at Director's meetings, Supervisors' meetings, emails, the agency website, and DHS SharePoint. Training is also purchased from outside sources.
- Staff are encouraged to participate in professional, service, and consumer organizations, such as the National Rehabilitation Association, Lions Clubs, the National Federation of the Blind, the American Council of the Blind, and the Arkansas Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), and opportunities are available to attend organizations' state and national conferences.

Retention of qualified personnel is addressed through CEU credit for staff training, as well as opportunities for expanding skills and knowledge in a variety of areas.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs {Attachment 4.10(e)}

Describe how the designated state unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.

Appropriate modes of communication, including sign language interpreters, are available on a contractual basis. The directive to utilize the contracts has been provided to all staff and is on file in each DSB office; it is also in DSB policy.

DSB serves on the Arkansas Advisory Committee for the Arkansas Project for Children with Deafblindness and is an affiliate of the Helen Keller National Center.

DSB provides interpreter services for communication with persons with limited English speaking ability on a contractual basis. In addition, one of the Area Field Supervisors speaks Spanish and French and understands Portuguese from having lived in Brazil (Central Arkansas has a community of Brazilians). Another Area Field Supervisor speaks Norwegian, Icelandic, Danish and Swedish languages. A member of the Business and Technology staff is fluent in Spanish. DHS has an in-house, certified Spanish interpreter in Miller County. These communication resources can be utilized as needed to serve consumers.

Reader service, guide service, and any special adaptive equipment are made available to applicants for services, DSB consumers, and DSB personnel. Information is also available in the medium of choice for persons making application for DSB services and for persons with disabilities who are employed by DSB.

Coordination of Personnel Development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act {Attachment 4.10(f)}

Describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated state unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.

DSB is a charter member in the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), which coordinates transition services and discusses education-related issues. AITP has representatives from 26 agencies and organizations, including, but not limited to Arkansas Transition Services (ATS), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Disability Services (DDS), DSB, parent centers, the private sector, and public and private schools. AITP involves transition agencies and organizations at a state level through quarterly meetings and shares information through its website.

Through the AITP, local issues are addressed by local teams. The local teams provide oversight to insure that transition goals and services are in place by the time a child becomes eligible, as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA 2004).

DSB continues to participate in the Transition Learning Collaborative (TLC), a group established by the Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center to share information and resources to improve transition at the state level. TACE Center staff researches student data collection and analyzes models used in other states and shares them with the states in the TLC collaborative. The TLC is composed of transition coordinators from both general and blind VR agencies in Region VI. Interaction with other states and TACE increases the resources available to DSB in regard to best practices and information about Section 101, IDEA, ADA and the Individual Education Plan (IEP). DSB's transition coordinator participates in monthly TLC teleconferences.

A DSB policy directive instructs Counselors to contact transition professionals twice a year to identify any transition needs.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment **{Attachment 4.11(a)}**

Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:

- individuals with most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- individuals with disabilities who are minorities;
- individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program; and
- individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.

DSB conducts a comprehensive, statewide needs assessment at least every three years and the results are used in developing goals in the State Plan and providing services to consumers. The next Comprehensive Needs Assessment will be conducted in FY 2016. The most recently completed Comprehensive Needs Assessment was conducted in 2013, and its results can be found in the FY 2014 State Plan.

Annual Estimate of Individuals to be Served and Costs of Services

{Attachment 4.11(b)}

- Identify the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services.
- Identify the number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds under:
 - Part B of Title I;
 - Part B of Title VI;
 - each priority category, if under an order of selection.
- Identify the cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

Basis for Estimates

DSB uses census data, population growth, the incidence of blindness, and historical data as the basis to project the number of individuals to be served through Part B of Title I and the number of supported employment cases to be served through Part B of Title VI.

Estimates for Part B of Title I for FY 2015:

DSB estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,730 consumers at a total cost of \$4,516,818 (\$2,863 per consumer). Of this number, it is projected that 686 will be minorities. By comparison, in the last completed year DSB served 1,690 VR consumers.

Note: In addition to a growing Hispanic population, Arkansas has one of the highest Marshallese populations in the United States. In the 2010 Census count for Arkansas, 4,324 people identified themselves as Marshallese, placing the state as having the highest Marshallese population in the continental United States and the second highest overall (with Hawaii having 7,412). The Compact of Free Association (COFA), which allows the Marshallese to live and travel freely and at-will between the Marshall Islands and the United States, will end in 2023.

Estimates for Part B of Title VI for FY 2015:

DSB estimates it will serve 20 consumers in supported employment in FY 2015, at a total cost of \$289,000 (\$14,450 per consumer). By comparison, in the last completed year, seven consumers were in supported employment.

DSB continues its agreement with World Services for the Blind and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind to provide SE services, training, and placement through the jointly-developed Vocational Assistance Under Long Term (VAULT) program.

In 2015, DSB will earmark a sum of VR funds for an establishment grant to World Services for the Blind in conjunction with Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind to support DSB efforts to expand the capacity of the State of Arkansas to provide supported employment services to individuals in Arkansas who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Estimates of Eligible Consumers for FY 2015:

Based on statistical reporting derived from the American Community Survey, an overall rate of 2.9% for visual disability for the Arkansas population aged 16 to 64 showed approximately 18,000 persons in Arkansas might be eligible for and could receive vocational rehabilitation services from DSB.

Goals and Priorities {Attachment 4.11(c) (1)}

The goals and priorities are based on the comprehensive statewide assessment, on requirements related to the performance standards and indicators, and on other information about the state agency. (See section 101(a)(15)(C) of the Act.) This attachment should be updated when there are material changes in the information that require the description to be amended.

- Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.
- Identify if the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, jointly reviewed the goals and priorities and jointly agreed to any revisions.
- Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

- Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
 - the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
 - the performance of the state on standards and indicators; and
- other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

DSB developed the following goals based on RSA guidance for the State Plan FY 2014, recommendations by the DSB Board, and the 2013 comprehensive, statewide needs assessment, which is done at least every 3 years. Below are the goals, as approved by the DSB Board:

Goal #1: DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will expand and improve services to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired in the underserved Delta area.

Performance Measure: DSB will explore the possibility of having regular itinerary points in DHS offices in the Delta using existing DSB staff to meet with consumers one day a week.

Strategy: VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers will make unduplicated job contacts with employers.

Performance Measure: VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers will each make two face-to-face job contacts with employers per month.

Strategy: VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers will ensure that consumers are actively seeking employment.

Performance Measure: VR Counselors will require consumers to submit three job contacts or applications per week. Otherwise, the consumer will be moved to a different status or placed in interrupted status. The VR Counselor or the Area Supervisor can exempt individuals from the requirement for short amounts of time if there is good cause.

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment.

Performance Measures:

- The certified Small Business Developer will train staff hired since the last Operation Jumpstart training in May, 2012. This will enable them to better assist consumers who have expressed an interest in starting their own business.
- Each self-employment proposal submitted by a consumer will be reviewed by a team composed of the Business and Technology Administrator, Small Business Developer, the Field Services Administrator, the Area Field Services Supervisor that oversees small business endeavors, and the consumer's VR Counselor to ensure that a proposal is realistic and sustainable before it is approved and any funds are provided. (Upon the proposal being approved, the IPE will be updated.)

- A brochure will be developed to provide interested consumers with information about DSB's small business self-employment program.

Strategy: Based upon consumer response and effectiveness, DSB will continue to hold Job Clubs to assist participants in acquiring job seeking skills and improving their probability of securing employment.

Performance Measure: Job Clubs will be held at least once a month at the DSB Tech Lab and a location in the field, such as a DSB office, an accessible kiosk, a Workforce Center, a college, or other site.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer individuals for benefits counseling.

Performance Measures:

- Area Supervisors will monitor caseloads to ensure that VR Counselors will refer 100% of SSI and SSDI VR consumers for benefits counseling.
- Counselors will make consumers aware of benefits counseling at the time of application, at the time of IPE's, and at the time of closure.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer Older Individuals who are Blind and interested in employment to VR and will ensure that its OIB contractor will as well.

Performance Measure: DSB and its OIB contractor will refer 100% of Older Blind individuals who are interested in employment to VR.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful consumers and their employers.

Performance Measures:

- Each caseload manager will select one individual from his/her caseload as an area Consumer of the Year and nominate the individual as a candidate for the overall state Consumer of the Year.
- DSB will award area Consumers of the Year and their employers with trophies/plaques and related publicity.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will acquire specialized training to develop the skills and credentials of Rehabilitation Teachers.
- DSB will continue to assign new Rehabilitation Teachers to assistive technology training as vacant positions are filled, so that staff can provide basic technology support to consumers in their respective geographic areas statewide. Supervisors will schedule veteran RTs for remedial training as a formal part of their professional development plan.
- DSB will continue to provide training to new Workforce Services staff as vacancies occur in order to increase their knowledge of accessible technology and the needs of consumers.
- DSB staff will continue to meet consumers at Workforce Services offices, including DSB-sponsored accessible kiosks, in order to assist consumers in their job searches and in becoming more comfortable interacting with the public in an employment setting.

Strategy: DSB will increase the skills, credentials and professional affiliations of its novice Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as they move to assume senior counseling responsibilities in connection with DSB overall succession planning.

Performance Measures:

- Novice counselors will attend a specific orientation to VR issues and will participate in specialized training, through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association or other qualified sources.
- Novice counselors will be exposed to professional organizations each year, as documented in their professional development plans.

Strategy: DSB will establish multi-layered support systems for clients by developing performance based contracts with Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and other providers across the state, as an extension of their missions, to provide depth to volunteer employment-related transportation and other services in rural areas of the state.

Performance Measure: Deliverables within the contracts will be met.

Strategy: DSB will establish an information clearinghouse and scheduled demonstration lab on selected college campuses to inform Transition Partner organizations of the needs of students with significant vision problems, and the cost-effective resources available to them.

Performance Measure: An information clearinghouse and scheduled demonstration lab will be established on at least one college campus.

Strategy: DSB will explore ways to better utilize the DSB central Tech Lab.

Performance Measure: DSB will re-design the technology needs assessment and database process for the DSB central Tech Lab to better align it with RSA guidelines on Rehabilitation Engineering. This is a specific initiative of the DSB Leadership Training Team, in partnership with the Oklahoma Wicked Innovation: Next Generation Solutions (WINGS) leadership training project.

Strategy: DSB will begin using AWARE, its new client data management system.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will begin building data into the employer module that will contain information about employers and job openings.
- The new system will facilitate the production of statistical reports in real time to track productivity to plan VR Counselors weekly and monthly goals.

Strategy: To augment the efforts of DSB staff, DSB will use peer mentoring in a variety of situations to allow experienced consumers to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced consumers, often leading and guiding by example of his/her success in an area.

Performance Measures:

- Peer mentoring will be used to connect consumers interested in self-employment with individuals who have owned small businesses and can offer advice and support.
- Consumers of the Year will be encouraged to provide peer mentoring to other individuals who are blind and severely visually impaired that are trying to manage their rehabilitation plans, gain marketable skills, and secure good jobs.
- Participants in Job Club will be encouraged to mentor each other in their searches for employment and development of job readiness skills.

Goal #2: DSB will increase its services to transition students.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among state transition partner organizations.

Performance Measure: DSB will sponsor or participate in at least one training or event that will bring together transition partners for the purpose of exchanging information that will specifically benefit students who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed.

Performance Measure: Counselors/Rehabilitation Assistants will coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors to maintain lists of transition students. The Field Services Administrator will review the database to insure it is being maintained by Rehabilitation Assistants, who input local information.

Strategy: VR Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to insure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school.

Performance Measure: Area Supervisors will monitor this during case reviews to insure that no transition student will graduate without a current IPE.

Strategy: DSB will hold Parent Summits to assist parents and other stakeholders in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

Performance Measure: In FY 2015, DSB will invite ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and transition parents to a Parent Summit with VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers, to provide information about assistive technology; rights and responsibilities; available resources and services; benefits counseling; and funding for college and career start-up costs.

Strategy: VR Counselors will make face-to-face visits to LEA Supervisors in their territories.

Performance Measure: VR Counselors will have from the beginning of the school year to December 1, to complete the face-to-face visits with LEA Supervisors.

Strategy: DSB will continue to provide assessments to transition students specifically focused on activities of daily living, including but not limited to, mobility, knowledge of available transportation resources, self-advocacy, acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, benefits counseling, and rights and responsibilities as an informed consumer.

Performance Measure:

- All transition students will be referred to Rehabilitation Teachers for initial assessments of daily living skills and needed instruction.
- Formal evaluations for assistive technology will be performed by Tech Lab staff in accordance with RSA guidelines on Rehabilitation Engineering.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Performance Measure:

- DSB will continue its system of mail-outs and emails to public schools.
- DSB will initiate outreach efforts to private, home, and accredited virtual schools.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI).

Performance Measures:

- DSB will continue its system of mail-outs and emails twice a year to area ESVI representatives. In addition to the local networking efforts, the Transition Coordinator will dialogue with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB.

- DSB will refer consumers under age 14 to ESVI and will encourage referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB.

Goal #3: DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders.

Strategy: DSB will use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability.

Performance Measure: Each VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher will staff at least one DSB exhibit at a widely attended or significantly relevant event in his/her territory.

Strategy: DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith-based groups.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will monitor the contracts with faith-based organizations and CIL's to do outreach and increase referrals from churches to insure contractors submit documentation and meet deliverables as required in the RFQ.
- VR Counselors will make at least four faith-based outreach efforts in each of their geographic areas in FY 2015.
- VR Counselors will make at least two minority outreach efforts to Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnic groups in each of their geographic areas in FY 2015.

Strategy: Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well.

Performance Measure: DSB will continue to send all of its supervisors/administrators to these conferences to interact with consumers and will make presentations as requested.

**Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds
{Attachment 4.11(c) (4)}**

Specify the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under section 622 of the Act for the provision of supported employment services.

DSB will allocate funding from Title VI, Part B to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. These funds are a supplement to the funds provided under Title I of the Act. Title VI, Part B funds will only be used in the provision of supported employment services to those individuals determined eligible through assessments determining that it is an appropriate objective. Supported employment services will be customer-driven through the setting of goals in the consumer's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

In FY 2013, the most recently completed year, DSB provided supported employment services to seven individuals. Of this number, two cases were closed; one was closed competitively employed not in supported employment, and one was closed without an employment outcome. No cases were closed competitively employed in supported

employment or closed not competitively employed not in supported employment. FY 2015 Projections: DSB estimates it will serve 20 consumers in supported employment.

Issues affecting supported employment in Arkansas include: the limited number of service providers statewide; the rural nature of the state; the lack of consistent available funding for extended services; and the lack of knowledge, experience, and training SE providers have in the provision of supported employment services and placement for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. Many providers do not have and are unwilling to expend time, monies and resources to train staff in this specialty area of expertise.

To resolve some of these issues, DSB has an agreement with World Services for the Blind and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind, which have long histories of serving individuals who are blind and severely visually impaired, to provide SE services, training, and placement through the jointly-developed program, Vocational Assistance Under Long Term (VAULT).

In 2015, DSB will earmark a sum of VR funds for an establishment grant to World Services for the Blind in conjunction with Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind to support DSB efforts to expand the capacity of the State of Arkansas to provide supported employment services to individuals in Arkansas who are blind or severely visually impaired.

DSB provides assistive technology services and devices based upon assessments and recommendations by the DSB Technology Unit, availability of funds, and the consumer's IPE.

DSB has set the following goals for the utilization and distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds, based on the most recent comprehensive needs assessment and the recommendations of the DSB Board:

Goal #1: Increase the number of Supported Employment Providers to better serve DSB consumers.

Strategy: DSB will provide resources to significantly expand the capacity of its partners World Services for the Blind (WSB) and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind (ALB) as Community Rehabilitation Programs to provide Supported Employment services to DSB consumers.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will earmark a sum of VR funds for an establishment grant to World Services for the Blind and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind.
- DSB will monitor the VAULT agreement and the terms of the establishment grant with WSB and ALB to insure they meet deliverables and submit documentation as required.

Strategy: DSB will continue to collaborate with other agencies, such as Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE), to increase the number of SE providers in unserved or underserved areas of the state due to geographic or other issues.

Performance Measure: At least two new potential SE providers will be identified and contacted.

Strategy: DSB will educate WSB and ALB about the benefits of becoming Employment Networks (EN's).

Performance Measure: At least one training will take place in regard to WSB and ALB qualifying to become an EN.

Goal #2: Increase the quality of SE Providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will determine SE vendor standards targeted to meet the blindness and visual impairment needs of its consumers.

Performance Measure: A policy on SE vendor standards will be developed.

Strategy: DSB will collaborate with WSB and ALB to develop systematic training for family/natural support members and SE consumers.

Performance Measure: A system will be developed and put in place.

Strategy: DSB will train new staff and provide updates to veteran staff on new developments in the SE program.

Performance Measure: At least one staff training on SE program design will be conducted in FY 2015.

**Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities
{Attachment 4.11(d)}**

This attachment should include required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the vocational rehabilitation and the supported employment programs.

- Describe the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.
- Identify how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process.
- Describe how assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis.

- Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities.
- Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.
- Identify plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs, if applicable.
- Describe strategies to improve the performance with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators.
- Describe strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.
- Describe how the agency's strategies will be used to:
 - achieve the goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1);
 - support innovation and expansion activities; and
 - overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the state Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the state supported employment Services Program.

Strategies

DSB has developed the following strategies to expand and improve services to its consumers. These strategies were developed in regard to its goals for the State Plan FY 2015, which are to: increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired; increase services to transition students; and expand outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders. The performance measures are included with the goals in 4.11(c) (1). Here are the strategies:

- *Strategy:* DSB will expand and improve services to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired in the underserved Delta area.
- *Strategy:* VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers will make unduplicated job contacts with employers.
- *Strategy:* VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers will ensure that consumers are actively seeking employment.
- *Strategy:* DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment.

- *Strategy:* Based upon consumer response and effectiveness, DSB will continue to hold Job Clubs to assist participants in acquiring job seeking skills and improving their probability of securing employment.
- *Strategy:* DSB will continue to refer individuals for benefits counseling.
- *Strategy:* DSB will continue to refer Older Individuals who are Blind and interested in employment to VR and will ensure its OIB contractor will as well.
- *Strategy:* DSB will continue to recognize successful consumers and their employers.
- *Strategy:* DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment.
- *Strategy:* DSB will increase the skills, credentials and professional affiliations of its novice Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as they move to assume senior counseling responsibilities in connection with DSB overall succession planning.
- *Strategy:* DSB will establish multi-layered support systems for clients by developing performance based contracts with Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and other providers across the state, as an extension of their missions, to provide depth to volunteer employment-related transportation and other services in rural areas of the state.
- *Strategy:* DSB will establish an information clearinghouse and scheduled demonstration lab on selected college campuses to inform Transition Partner organizations of the needs of students with significant vision problems, and the cost-effective resources available to them.
- *Strategy:* DSB will explore ways to better utilize the DSB central Tech Lab.
- *Strategy:* DSB will begin using AWARE, its new client data management system.
- *Strategy:* To augment the efforts of DSB staff, DSB will use peer mentoring in a variety of situations to allow experienced consumers to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced consumers, often leading and guiding by example of his/her success in an area.
- *Strategy:* DSB will support training and the exchange of information among state transition partner organizations.
- *Strategy:* DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed.
- *Strategy:* VR Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to insure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school.
- *Strategy:* DSB will hold Parent Summits to assist parents and other stakeholders in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.
- *Strategy:* VR Counselors will make face-to-face visits to LEA Supervisors in their territories.
- *Strategy:* DSB will continue to provide assessments to transition students specifically focused on activities of daily living, including but not limited to, mobility, knowledge of available transportation resources, self-advocacy, acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, and rights and responsibilities as an informed consumer.

- *Strategy:* DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with public schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.
- *Strategy:* DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI).
- *Strategy:* DSB will use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability.
- *Strategy:* DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith-based groups.
- *Strategy:* Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well.

A broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired as appropriate at each stage of the rehabilitation process in accordance with the individual's employment goal and IPE. The provision of assistive technology services and devices is based upon assessments and recommendations by the DSB Technology Unit, availability of funds, and the consumer's IPE. DSB will continue to offer assistive technology training to Rehabilitation Teachers in FY 2015, so that staff can continue to provide basic technology support to consumers in their local areas.

DSB has developed the following strategies to expand and improve supported employment services to its consumers. These strategies were developed in regard to its SE goals for FY 2015, which are: increase the number of Supported Employment Providers to better serve DSB consumers and increase the quality of SE Providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. The performance measures are included with the goals in 4.11(c) (4). Here are the strategies for those goals:

- *Strategy:* DSB will provide resources to significantly expand the capacity of its partners World Services for the Blind (WSB) and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind (ALB) as Community Rehabilitation Programs to provide Supported Employment services to DSB consumers.
- *Strategy:* DSB will continue to collaborate with other agencies, such as Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE), to increase the number of SE providers in unserved or underserved areas of the state due to geographic or other issues.
- *Strategy:* DSB will educate WSB and ALB about the benefits of becoming Employment Networks (EN's).
- *Strategy:* DSB will determine SE vendor standards targeted to meet the blindness and visual impairment needs of its consumers.
- *Strategy:* DSB will collaborate with WSB and ALB to develop systematic training for family/natural support members and SE consumers.
- *Strategy:* DSB will train new staff and provide updates to veteran staff on new developments in the SE program.

General Education Provisions Act

DSB complies with Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) by ensuring equitable access and participation to its programs and that consumers are not discriminated against by gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age.

Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

DSB will continue the implementation of its new data management system and will begin building data into the employer module that will contain information about employers and job openings.

Evaluation and Reports of Progress {Attachment 4.11(e) (2)}

1. Identify all VR program goals consistent with the goals described in the most recently submitted version of Attachment 4.11(c)(1), including an evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals were achieved.
 - Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
 - Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

2. Identify all supported employment program goals consistent with the goals described in Attachment 4.11(c)(4), including an evaluation of the extent to which the supported employment program goals were achieved.
 - Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
 - Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

3. Provide an assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for the most recently completed federal fiscal year.

4. Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in the most recent completed federal fiscal year.

Evaluation of FY 2013 VR Goals:

Below are the evaluation and reports of progress for the most recently completed FY 2013 VR Goals and Priorities, covering October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013:

Goal #1: DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers will make job contacts with employers.

Performance Measure:

- Each VR Counselor and Rehabilitation Teacher will make two face-to-face job contacts with employers per month.
- A brochure will be developed to give employers.

Goal Met/Extended: Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers continue to make two face-to-face contacts with employers per month and document them in monthly reports.

Development of an employer brochure is continuing in cooperation with the Department of Career Education.

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment.

Performance Measure:

- All self-employment proposals will be reviewed by a team composed of the Business and Technology Unit Manager, the Field Services Administrator, and the VR Counselor to ensure that a proposal is realistic and sustainable before it is approved and any funds are provided.
- In addition to the goal and steps of self-employment being on the IPE, the consumer must complete a written business plan with the DSB business-ownership team described above.
- A brochure will be developed to provide interested consumers with information about DSB's small business self-employment program.
- Staff will receive training in Operation Jumpstart, a hands-on, microenterprise development program designed to help entrepreneurs test the feasibility of their business ideas and plan to launch new ventures. DSB's Operation Jumpstart's mission is to help consumers who have expressed an interest in starting their own business, explore the possibility, develop a business plan, and start their own business. In doing so we help them become economically independent and be an active part of their communities.

Goal Met/Extended: This process was followed and business plans were submitted and approved. However, the Small Business Program was restructured and moved to the Field Services unit. As a result, plans for a small business brochure are being revised. Instead of doing an Operation Jumpstart training in 2013, it was decided to do one-on-one training as needed using the Small Business Developer, who is trained and certified as a train-the-trainer in Operation Jumpstart.

Strategy: Based upon consumer response and effectiveness, DSB will continue to hold Job Clubs to assist participants in acquiring job seeking skills and improving their probability of securing employment. Job Clubs also encourage peer mentoring.

Performance Measure: Job Clubs will be held at least once a month at the DSB Tech Lab and field offices.

Goal Met: Job Clubs are being conducted as planned.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer individuals for benefits counseling.

Performance Measure:

- Area Supervisors will monitor caseloads to ensure that VR Counselors will refer at least 10 consumers per caseload for benefits counseling.
- The monthly report will be revised to capture this information.

Goal Met: In 2013 the White River Area Agency on Aging became an employment network doing benefits counseling for DSB consumers. Instead of revising the monthly report, a form specific to benefits counseling referrals was developed.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer eligible Older Blind individuals to VR.

Performance Measure: DSB will refer 100% of eligible Older Blind individuals to VR.

Goal Met: All Older Blind individuals interested in employment are referred to VR.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful consumers and their employers and will encourage peer mentoring.

Performance Measures:

- Each counselor who has been in his/her position for at least a year will nominate one individual from his/her caseload as a candidate for state Consumer of the Year and encourage the individual to serve as a peer mentor to other people who are blind or severely visually impaired.
- DSB will award Consumer of the Year candidates and their employers with trophies/plaques and related publicity.

Goal Met: Counselors are nominating outstanding Consumers of the Year, and the consumers and their employers are being recognized with trophies/plaques and publicity.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will acquire specialized training to develop the skills and credentials of Rehabilitation Teachers.
- DSB will continue to assign new Rehabilitation Teachers to assistive technology training as vacant positions are filled, so that staff can provide basic technology support to consumers in their respective geographic areas statewide. Supervisors will schedule veteran RTs for remedial training as a formal part of their professional development plan.
- DSB will continue to provide training to new Workforce Services staff as vacancies occur in order to increase their knowledge of accessible technology and the needs of consumers.
- DSB staff will continue to meet consumers at Workforce Services offices, including DSB-sponsored accessible kiosks, in order to assist consumers in their job searches and in becoming more comfortable interacting with the public in an employment setting.

Goal Met: DSB provided new Rehabilitation Teachers with assistive technology training and continued to train Workforce Services staffs. VR Counselors met consumers at accessible kiosks to assist them in their job searches.

Strategy: DSB will increase the skills, credentials and professional affiliations of its novice Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as they move to assume senior counseling responsibilities in connection with DSB overall succession planning.

Performance Measures:

- Novice counselors will attend a specific orientation to VR issues and will participate in specialized training, through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association or other qualified sources.
- Novice counselors will be exposed to professional organizations each year, as documented in their professional development plans.

Goal Met: Novice counselors were given the opportunity to attend the ARA annual conference and to apply for stipends to attend the conferences of professional organizations.

Strategy: DSB will contract with local providers to secure select VR services to capitalize on the established relationships of such contractors with local employers, to secure appropriate employment for DSB clients in geographic proximity to their homes.

Performance Measure: Deliverables within the contracts will be met.

Goal Met: Instead of contracting with employment providers, DSB decided to pay private, local job placement specialists on a fee-for-service basis.

Strategy: DSB will establish multi-layered support systems for clients by developing performance based contracts with Faith-Based Organizations (FBO's) and other providers across the state, as an extension of their missions, to provide depth to volunteer employment-related transportation and other services in rural areas of the state.

Performance Measure: Deliverables within the contracts will be met.

Goal Met: Deliverables were met by CIL's who participated in the RFQ and contracted with DSB, but some CIL's chose not to participate. No responses were received from FBO's.

Strategy: DSB will establish an information clearinghouse and scheduled demonstration lab on selected college campuses to inform Transition Partner organizations of the needs of students with significant vision problems, and the cost-effective resources available to them.

Performance Measure: An information clearinghouse and scheduled demonstration lab will be established on at least one college campus.

Goal Met: The Business and Technology Unit demonstrated technology to college and high school students on a college campus.

Strategy: DSB will explore ways to better utilize the DSB central Tech Lab.

Performance Measure: DSB will re-design the technology needs assessment and database process for the DSB central Tech Lab to better align it with RSA guidelines on Rehabilitation Engineering. This is a specific initiative of the DSB Leadership Training Team, in partnership with the Oklahoma Wicked Innovation: Next Generation Solutions (WINGS) leadership training project.

Goal Met: A survey about Tech Lab services was distributed to consumers and DSB staff. The response rate was very low, but the WINGS project itself led to the purchase of an instructional library for use when teaching in the Tech Lab. This library includes

tutorials for MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook for use with JAWS, MAGic, Window-eyes, and Internet Explorer. The tutorials are updated on a regular basis and additional instructional materials for other software and equipment is added as needed or available.

Strategy: DSB will convert its client data MIS system to a web-based environment.

Performance Measures:

- Counselors will be able to enter client data and gather signatures during local visits, which will streamline the flow of services.
- The new system will facilitate the production of statistical reports.

Goal Met: DSB purchased the AWARE data management system.

Strategy: To augment the efforts of DSB staff, DSB will use peer mentoring in a variety of situations to allow experienced consumers to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced consumers, often leading and guiding by example of his/her success in an area.

Performance Measures:

- Peer mentoring will be used to connect consumers interested in self-employment with individuals who have owned small businesses and can offer advice and support.
- Consumers of the Year will be encouraged to provide peer mentoring to other individuals who are blind and severely visually impaired that are trying to manage their rehabilitation plans, gain marketable skills, and secure good jobs.
- Participants in Job Club will be encouraged to mentor each other in their searches for employment and development of job readiness skills.

Goal Met: Peer mentoring is occurring as planned.

Goal #2: DSB will increase its services to transition students.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among state transition partner organizations.

Performance Measure: DSB will sponsor or participate in at least one training or event that will bring together transition partners for the purpose of exchanging information that will specifically benefit students who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Goal Met: A Parent Summit was held in Little Rock August 2013 for transition students and their families from throughout the state. Transition partners were invited to attend and some were asked to make presentations. The success of the summit confirmed that additional summits will be held around the state in coming years.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed.

Performance Measure: The Transition Coordinator will review the database to insure it is being maintained by Rehabilitation Assistants, who input local information.

Goal Met: The Transition Coordinator reviewed the database and insured it was being maintained.

Strategy: VR Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to insure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school.

Performance Measure: Area Supervisors will monitor this during case reviews to insure that no transition student will graduate without a current IPE.

Goal Met: Case reviews showed no students were graduating without current IPE's.

Strategy: DSB will hold Parent Summits around the state to assist parents and other stakeholders in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

Performance Measure: In FY 2013, DSB will invite ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and transition parents to Parent Summits with VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers, to provide information about students' rights and accommodations.

Goal Met: A Parent Summit was held in Little Rock August 2013 for transition students and their families from throughout the state. ESVI was included on the agenda. The information provided included IEP's, but topics extended beyond high school and into college services. The success of the summit confirmed that additional summits will be held around the state in coming years.

Strategy: VR Counselors or Rehabilitation Teachers will make face-to-face visits to each school counselor assigned to students who are blind or visually impaired in their territories.

Performance Measure: VR Counselors or Rehabilitation Teachers will have from the beginning of the school year to December 1, to complete the face-to-face visits to school counselors described above.

Goal Met: VR Counselors made face-to-face contacts within required timeframes.

Strategy: DSB will continue to provide assessments to transition students specifically focused on activities of daily living, including but not limited to, mobility, knowledge of available transportation resources, self-advocacy, acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, and rights and responsibilities as an informed consumer.

Performance Measure: All transition students will be referred to Rehabilitation Teachers for assessment of daily living skills and needed instruction.

Goal Met: Transition students are referred for assessments in accordance with policy and the State Plan.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with public schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Performance Measure: DSB will continue its system of mail-outs and emails to public schools.

Goal Met: Mail-outs and emails are sent to contacts in public schools and have improved communication and strengthened relationships.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with ESVI.

Performance Measures:

- DSB will continue its system of mail-outs and emails to area ESVI representatives. In addition to the local networking efforts, the Transition Coordinator will dialogue with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB.
- DSB will refer young consumers to ESVI and will encourage referrals from ESVI to DSB.

Goal Met: Mail-outs and emails are sent to ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and have improved communication and strengthened relationships. The Transition Coordinator maintains contact with ESVI at a state level.

Goal #3: DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders.

Strategy: DSB will use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability.

Performance Measure: Each VR Counselor will man at least one DSB exhibit at a widely attended or significantly relevant event in his/her territory.

Goal Met: VR Counselors met or exceeded this goal in each territory.

Strategy: DSB will contract with CIL's to reach out to faith-based organizations and inform them of DSB services.

Performance Measure: CIL's will submit to DSB copies of minutes of meetings with faith-based groups, reports on trainings, and monthly reports, including the number of faith-based referrals.

Goal Met: DSB staff monitoring the contract determined that CIL's submitted program and financial documentation as required by the RFQ.

Strategy: DSB will increase its services to minorities.

Performance Measures: DSB will make at least one minority outreach effort to Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnic groups in each of its geographic areas in FY 2013.

Goal Met: VR Counselors met or exceeded this goal in each area.

Strategy: Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well.

Performance Measure: DSB will continue to send at least five supervisors/administrators to these conferences and will make presentations as requested.

Goal Met: DSB exceeded the number of supervisors and administrators that were to be sent to conferences of blindness consumer groups. Opportunities to attend these conferences were extended to direct service staff, and some staff chose to participate.

Evaluation of FY 2013 SE Goals:

Below are the evaluation and reports of progress for the most recently completed FY 2013 SE Goals and Priorities, covering October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013:

Goal #1: Increase the number of Supported Employment Providers to better serve DSB consumers.

Strategy: DSB will provide resources to significantly expand the capacity of its partners World Services for the Blind (WSB) and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind (LFB) as Community Rehabilitation Programs to provide Supported Employment services to DSB consumers.

Performance Measure: WSB and LFB will begin providing SE services to at least half of the DSB consumers in supported employment during FY 2013.

Goal Met: DSB referred 100% of its SE consumers to WSB and LFB in 2013. DSB also established a methodology for each VR Counselor to submit two SE referrals to WSB, so that 26 consumers would be referred each year forward of 2013.

Strategy: DSB will continue to collaborate with other agencies, such as Arkansas chapter of APSE: Advancing Employment, Connecting People, to expand the number of SE providers.

Performance Measure: At least two new potential SE providers will be identified and contacted.

Goal Met: Career Links and Friendship Community Care became new SE providers for DSB.

Strategy: DSB will encourage consumers' family members and other natural support individuals to become SE providers.

Performance Measure: DSB will collaborate with TACE and other organizations to develop training for the family support member and consumer.

Goal Met: Training for natural supports was developed in 2013 and finalized and held in March 2014.

Strategy: DSB will continue to encourage CRPs to become Employment Networks (ENs).

Performance Measure: A meeting will have taken place with at least one CRP to discuss the possibility of its becoming an EN.

Goal Met: DSB discussed the possibility of becoming EN's with WSB and LFB.

Goal #2: Increase the quality of SE Providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will collaborate with TACE and other organizations to develop training for the family support member and consumer.

Performance Measures: At least one training on SE will be offered to family support personnel and SE consumers.

Goal Met: DSB collaborated with TACE, WSB and LFB to develop the training for natural supports. The first training was held in March 2014.

Strategy: Orient DSB staff to new program design.

Performance Measures: At least one staff training on SE program design will be conducted in FY 2013.

Goal Met: Staff received training on the new program design at the annual field service meeting.

Evaluation and Report of Progress on the FY 2013 Performance Evaluation Standards and Performance Indicators

Below is the evaluation and report of progress on the Performance Evaluation Standards and Performance Indicators established by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in the reporting of data to comply with the 34 CFR 361, Subpart E, 361.80 through 361.89 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1998.

DSB is making progress toward meeting Performance Indicator 1.6: Self-support. DSB continues to serve homemakers with ILRS funds in an effort to reduce the number of VR homemaker closures. DSB has an average of 14% homemaker closures. The target has been to keep these closures under 20%. Although other factors affect this indicator, homemaker closures have proven to be the most influential.

Another factor in meeting Performance Indicator 1.6 is that Arkansas' economy does not support wage increases on a yearly basis. Therefore, consumers who often enter and exit

DSB programs within the same year do not experience an increase in wages after receiving services. Unfortunately, this factor is beyond DSB's control.

The information below describes DSB performance for Standard 1 and Standard 2:

Evaluation Standard 1 - Employment Outcomes:

A Designated State Unit (DSU) must assist any eligible individual, including an individual with a significant disability, to obtain, maintain, or regain high-quality employment.

In order to pass Standard 1 a state VR agency must meet or exceed the performance level for four of the six indicators including meeting or exceeding the performance level for two of the three primary indicators. Primary indicators are 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5.

- **Performance Indicator 1.1: Change in the number of employment outcomes**

The number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the current performance period compared to the number of individuals who exit the VR program after achieving an employment outcome during the previous performance period.

FY 2013	327
FY 2012	313
Result	+14 Individuals

Required Performance Level: DSU's performance in current period must equal or exceed performance in previous period.

- **Performance Indicator 1.2: Percent Employed**

Of all individuals who exit the VR program after receiving services, the percentage who are determined to have achieved an employment outcome.

428	Individuals exited after receiving services
327	Individuals or
76.40%	exited with an employment outcome

Required Performance Level: For the general and combined DSU's, the level is 55.8%; for agencies serving individuals who are blind, the level is 68.9%

- **Performance Indicator 1.3: Employed Competitively**

Of all Individuals determined to have achieved an employment outcome, the percentage who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage.

327	Individuals exited the VR Program with an employment outcome
273	Individuals or
83.49%	exited the VR Program with an employment outcome earning at least minimum wage (\$7.25)

Required Performance Level: For the general and combined DSU’s, the level is 72.6%; for agencies serving individuals who are blind, the level is 35.4%.

- **Performance Indicator 1.4: Significant Disability**

Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the percentage who are individuals with significant disabilities.

273	Individuals exited the VR Program with an employment outcome earning at least minimum wage (\$7.25)
273	Individuals or
100%	with significant disabilities exited the VR Program with an employment outcome earning at least minimum wage (\$7.25)

Required Performance Level: For the general and combined DSU’s, the level is 62.4%; for agencies serving individuals who are blind, the level is 89.0%

- **Performance Indicator 1.5: Earning Ratio**

The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to the State’s average hourly earnings for all individuals in the State who are employed (as derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports “State Average Annual Pay” for the most recent available year).

273	Individuals exited the VR Program with an employment outcome earning at least minimum wage (\$7.25)
\$12.42	Average hourly wage of individuals who exited the VR Program with an employment outcome earning at least minimum wage (\$7.25)
\$19.13	State’s average hourly earnings
.65	Ratio

Required Performance Level: For the general and combined DSU's, the level is a ratio of .52; for agencies serving individuals who are blind, the ratio is .59.

- **Performance Indicator 1.6: Self-support**

Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the difference between the percentage who report their own income as the largest single source of economic support at the time they exit the VR program and the percentage who report their own income as the largest single source of support at the time they apply for VR services.

241 or 88.28%	Individuals reported their own income as the largest single source of support at time of exit
171 or 62.64%	Individuals reported their own income as the largest single source of support at time of application
70 or 25.64%	Difference between the two percentages

Required Performance Level: For the general and combined DSU's, the level is an arithmetic difference of 53.0; for agencies serving individuals who are blind, the level is a difference of 30.4.

Evaluation Standard 2: Equal Access to Services

2.1 Service Rate

The service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all individuals with disabilities from non-minority backgrounds.

192	Minorities exited the VR Program
143	Minorities exited the VR Program after receiving services
74.48%	Service rate of minority individuals
350	Non-minorities exited the VR Program
285	Non-minorities exited the VR Program after receiving services
81.43%	Service rate of non-minority individuals
.91	Ratio level of service rate

Required Performance Level: All agencies must attain a ratio level of .80.

Report on How Funds Reserved for Innovation and Expansion Activities Were Utilized in the Most Recently Completed Federal Fiscal Year

In FY 2013, DSB used its Title I funds for innovation and expansion to purchase a web-based data management system and contract with an information technology firm to act

as a liaison between DSB and the data management system company. DSB also used Title 1 funds to expand its partnership with NFB-NEWSLINE® available through DSB's Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS) to consumers who are blind and severely visually impaired.

Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services {Attachment 6.3}

- Describe quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities
- Describe the timing of the transition to extended services

DSB continues its agreement with World Services for the Blind and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind to provide SE services, training, and placement through the jointly-developed Vocational Assistance Under Long Term (VAULT) program. WSB continues to provide assessments, skills training, and training to family members and significant others on issues related to blindness, including IL skills and overcoming barriers to employment. The Lighthouse and/or other SE vendors will provide direct job placement and job coaching. In March 2014, a summit for family members and significant others was held at WSB, and DSB staff were on-hand to assist.

In 2015, DSB will earmark a sum of VR funds for an establishment grant to World Services for the Blind in conjunction with Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind to support DSB efforts to expand the capacity of the State of Arkansas to provide supported employment services to individuals in Arkansas who are blind or severely visually impaired.

The VAULT program agreement and the establishment grant are expected to resolve some of the issues DSB has faced in serving SE consumers: The state has a limited number of service providers and a relatively low number of consumers who need SE services, particularly those who are blind or severely visually impaired. These consumers are spread throughout the rural parts of the state. Providers often consider these barriers as cost prohibitive. Added to this, providers want assurances of consistent available funding for continuing extended services, perhaps for the life of the consumer, and want payments for less tangible results than job placement, such as improving the consumers' social interaction. Another barrier that has been identified is the lack of knowledge, experience, and training SE providers have in the provision of supported employment services and placement for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. This is a specialty area of expertise that many providers do not have and are unwilling to expend time, monies and resources to train staff in this area.

DSB, ARS, the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS), and the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), Special Education Unit (SEU), Transition Unit partner through an interagency cooperative agreement outlining responsibilities and the provision of supported employment and other services to transition-aged consumers. The agreement produced an interagency steering committee which works on supported employment issues. During its formulation, the steering committee was facilitated by the EmployAbility Project, a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) program that was housed in the DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services.

Through the Governor's Executive Order 10-17, DSB coordinates with other state agencies to increase employment of Arkansans with disabilities. The DSB Director served on a task force that identified policies that created barriers and disincentives for employment of individuals who are disabled and made recommendations to the Governor. The Executive Order called for DHS to convene an Employment First Task Force comprised of disability service providers, consumer advocates, and the state agencies administering disability services, vocational rehabilitation, Workforce services, and education and to focus consumer services first toward the goal of self-sufficiency through employment.

Executive Order 10-17 also calls for the training of staff and counseling of consumers on Social Security work incentives, the Ticket to Work program, and employment and navigation services for individuals with disabilities who want to work. It aims to increase the availability and use of supported employment through interagency collaboration and reallocation of existing funds to better meet the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Transitioning from DSB services to extended services will not occur until at least 90 days after the case is placed into status 22 (employment), but should occur no later than 18 months after the case is placed into status 22. The timeframe for moving a case into extended services will be determined by the VR Counselor's monitoring of the consumer's adjustment to the work environment and will be outlined in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Supervisors review this process monthly, and the outcome is subject to case audit semi-annually.

In FY 2013, the most recently completed year, DSB provided supported employment services to seven individuals. Of this number, two cases were closed; one was closed competitively employed not in supported employment, and one was closed without an employment outcome. No cases were closed competitively employed in supported employment or closed not competitively employed not in supported employment. FY 2015 Projections: DSB estimates it will serve 20 consumers in supported employment.