

**ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.2(c)**

**SUMMARY OF INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STATE**

**REHABILITATION COUNCIL; RESPONSE OF THE DESIGNATED STATE**

**UNIT; AND EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTION OF INPUT OR**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The State Rehabilitation Council's Committee on State Plan and Policy reviewed the State Plan Updates for FFY2004 and provided the following comments:

Highlights of 2003 SRC activities include the continued work of the SRC's Committee on Quality Assurance facilitating and coordinating the second year of the Consumer Satisfaction Study. The SRC also sponsored Orientation Training for SRC members to re-familiarize members with the role of the SRC and introduce its newest members to ORS programs and services. A new SRC Staff Support position was created to provide assistance to the SRC for research of issues while also providing necessary office support. The SRC continued to advise ORS in areas that can enhance services for individuals with disabilities. The SRC will participate in the Federal 107 review that is scheduled for September 2003 and they will provide significant input related to gaps in service delivery. The SRC continues to be involved in strategic planning with the ORS staff. The SRC Executive Committee meets regularly to develop its leadership and review strategies that will assist the Designated State Unit (DSU) in achieving its mission. The SRC has assisted ORS in developing approaches to be used in attracting applicants with physical disabilities.

Comments on the State Plan included support of the commitment of the ORS to fill vacant Counselor positions with individuals who hold a Master Degree's in Rehabilitation Counseling as a way to ensure continuous provision of quality services (4.11 b).

*Rhode Island Combined  
FFY 2004  
Annual Update to State Plan*

The SRC continued to meet with the provider to design and administer the second tier customer satisfaction studies as a way to assess statewide needs. Counselors have received training in self-employment, and this will assist ORS in achieving greater activity in self-employment planning. (4.12 (a)).

The SRC continues to support clinical oversight and supervision as the primary strategy to address standards and achievement of employment outcomes.

Attachment 4.9 (c) (4)

“We request a copy of the Third Party Cooperative Agreement with the Department of Mental Health Retardation and Hospitals and a copy of the Third Party Cooperative Agreement with the Rhode Island Department of Education. (Pg. 2 of 3)”.

The 2002 annual update said “.....that beginning steps in initiation of the MOU development process with CRP’s related to supported employment services and outcomes has begun”, what progress has been made?

Attachment 4.11 (b)

We commend ORS for their commitment to filling three counselor vacancies with individuals with Master’s Degree in Vocational Rehabilitation. However, it is not clear from this update, how many vacancies still exist. We are concerned about the ORS’s anticipation of “significant number” of personnel that are expected to be retiring in the next five years. Given this expected loss of experienced staff, we feel that the new hires must also have certification in order to comply with the law. Because Rhode Island lacks any state approved certification, licensing, or registration requirement for rehabilitation counseling, ORS must adopt the “highest entry-level academic degree needed for any national....approved or recognized certification” in order to comply with federal law ( 34 C.F.R. 361.18 (c) (D) (2) and (i) . The only nationally recognized certification for rehabilitation counselor is the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor “CRC” standard established by the National Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification.

Given the expected loss of seasoned ORS staff through retirement, we believe that the highest level of counselor professionalism as demonstrated by national certification is more critical now than ever before.

We would be interested in knowing more about the “cross training” that ORS staff participates in through the Cooperative Agreement with the Rhode Island Department of Education in helping students transition from school to post school life.

Attachment 4.12 (a)

During 2002, a customer satisfaction survey was done in partnership with the SRC Quality Assurance Committee and the outcome was addressed last year. We believe that this was a good beginning but feel that ORS needs to work in expanding the survey to be as inclusive as possible in “....describing the rehabilitation needs of .....Individuals with disabilities residing within the state particularly the vocational rehabilitation needs of.....Individuals with the most significant disabilities....”(34 CFR 361.29 (a) (i))

We are glad to see that ORS continues to recognize informed choice as an area of focus and its commitment in training counselors to better help their clients in this area. We request a copy of the revised Agency’s Fee Schedule.

We are interested in learning more about the “pilot programs that have been developed in the Regional Education Collaboratives to provide seamless services to students” and “ .....the pilot program with a Transition Academy to expand the provision of vocational assessment and job development services for students with developmental disabilities” as described in Attachment 4.12 (a). We would be interested in knowing the number of students who have applied for and are receiving services. (Attachment 4.9 (c) (2) of the five-year plan has to do with Coordination with Education Officials)

Employment Options: We are pleased to see that ORS recognizes the need to increase ORS skills in assisting customers who choose self-employment as their career goal. We encourage ORS to offer specific training to their counselors and expand customer resources. Specifically, we are concerned that consumers receive services in a timely manner so as not to needlessly delay implementing the self-employment plan. Self-employment and telecommuting are well recognized as viable employment options especially for the most severely disabled population.

Transportation: We are glad to see that ORS remains committed to working with the R.I. Public Transit Authority and other state and local agencies to improve the transportation options for individuals with disabilities.

TANF: We would like more information and data regarding the Learning Disabilities Project from the LD Project Coordinator.

Cultural Diversity Outreach: We are concerned that the Bi-Lingual Health Representative position has been vacant since May 2002 but are pleased to see that ORS continues its advocacy efforts to fill this important position despite the hiring freeze. We would like to remind ORS that it needs to outreach to a variety of minority populations (i.e. Hispanics, Southeast Asian, Hmong, American Indian, etc.)

Mediation Update: According to the 2003 annual update, ORS reports that there were six cases where mediation had been initiated and one reached a satisfactory conclusion to date. What happened to the other five? Have they been handled in a timely manner?... and if not have the customers been informed of their appeal rights, including referral to the Client Assistance Program? The SRC requests redacted copies of the decisions.

Attachment 4.12 (b)

The five-year plan for FY 2000-2005 had projected new applications to be 2300 for FY 2004 while the 2003 annual plan projects a goal of 1800 applicants in 2004, why

the significant drop in numbers? However, we do notice that while the number of applications is lower, the overall numbers of individuals served are higher.

Attachment 4.12 (c) (1)

We notice the only comment from ORS is “No update required”. We would request an update to this Attachment to see if the goals that were stated in the 2002 Annual State Plan were achieved and if not an explanation as to why not.

Attachment 4.12 (c) (3)

We look forward to the opportunity to review the MOU’s that are currently being developed with the vendors to insure that the vendors are providing individually planned services to ORS’s customers in community integrated employment.

Attachment 4.12 (d)

Again, we applaud the cooperative efforts of ORS in working with the RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) and other state and local agencies to improve the transportation opportunities of individuals with disabilities. We understand that I&E funds have been earmarked by ORS for enhancing these initiatives, but we question if there is a plan to secure more permanent transportation funding.

Attachment 4.12 (d) (2)

We commend the advocacy efforts of ORS and are glad to see that Goodwill has hired an evaluator and job developer whose language of origin is Spanish, but we question if this one position can accommodate the need. We also want to reiterate the need for services for other minorities.

Attachment 4.12 (e)

While we appreciate the detailed information on how the State used the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities, we would request more information regarding the following areas: a description of the results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program; the progress made in improving

the effectiveness of the program from the previous year; an evaluation of the extent to which the identified goals were achieved; an identification of the strategies that contributed to achieving the goals; if the goals were not achieved, an explanation of the factors that impeded the achievement; and an assessment of the performance of the State on the standards and indicators established pursuant to section 106 of the Act.

Attachment 7.3

The SRC requests an update of the number of individuals who are receiving services. ORS reported that in 2000, there were approximately 700 individuals who required supported employment. In 2000, ORS reported that successful rehabilitation outcomes were achieved for approximately 20% of individuals served. We request more specific information regarding numbers served, the number of individuals with developmental disabilities versus the number of individuals with mental health issues and the percentage of successful outcomes.

RESPONSE OF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT: We agree that the Customer Satisfaction Studies are important mechanisms to assess the responsiveness of the ORS to individuals with disabilities and the quality and understanding of services and outcomes by the clients served. We plan to continue the partnership with the SRC in ensuring that Customer Satisfaction Studies continue.

We also will continue to recruit individuals who have attained a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling to enter Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling vacancies. Currently, there are five counselor vacancies at ORS. Persistent efforts are being made to fill every counselor vacancy although there are State budget restrictions. ORS continues to provide opportunities to interested staff for leadership development through participation in Agency work groups, RCEP advisory committees, and other training.

The ORS has trained staff on self-employment and provided technical assistance and resource assistance to staff and customers related to achieving self-employment outcomes. ORS has held training in 2003 related to self-employment and provided written guidance materials for staff and customers related to self-employment.

Clinical oversight and supervision continues with specific action plans within each region for addressing problem areas.

With ORS efforts to ensure access for people with disabilities, the cooperative agreements with MHRH and RIDE are posted on the website, as well as the Fee Schedule. They can be found at [www.ors.state.ri.us](http://www.ors.state.ri.us) in the section entitled Policies and Procedures.

In addition, current information describing the FIP/LD Program can also be found at the ORS website.

Three of the Regional Education Collaboratives are providing additional vocational services to students who require added help to achieve their employment goals. These services include job development, job placement and time-limited job coaching. To date, approximately six individuals have benefited from these services.

In total, two hundred and fourteen students received services under the ORS contracts with the five Regional Vocational Assessment Centers within the Education Collaboratives. Statistics for SFY 2003 are not yet available.

A new system of service delivery - the SE pilot project- a three-tier performance based system for supported employment-started in FFY 2003. Six vendors, four DD and two MH have agreed (a MOU) to be a part of the pilot project to explore the outcomes in the new system vs. outcomes from the current system both in terms of quality and quantity of employment outcomes. If results are positive, the pilot may be expanded across all supported employment vendors.

In order to ensure consistency among CRP's in terms of supported employment services, ORS has developed a grid describing each vendor's services. The grid is designed to be easily accessed and updated. By stating clearly what services are offered

by each CRP vendor, expectations are better understood by ORS customers enhancing informed choice. The grid was developed with the assistance of the Sherlock Center at Rhode Island College. ORS determined that an easily updated tool such as this would be more useful than a formal MOU.

Transportation: ORS is working collaboratively with other State agencies and organizations to increase transportation options statewide. Transportation is a support service that ORS may provide to eligible VR customers to enable them to access services necessary to achieve an employment outcome, but not as an on-going service. Therefore, ORS may not be a permanent funding source for transportation, but rather will work as a catalyst to establish broader funding resources in the State for transportation services.

Although the five-year State Plan had indicated there would be 2300 new applicants in FFY 2004, we remind the SRC that the figures are projections, and therefore, not necessarily accurate. ORS is reviewing all referral sources as recruitment for new VR applicants is initiated in order to ensure that ORS is reaching individuals with disabilities who could benefit from VR services.

Additional information requested by the SRC will be provided concurrent with the submission of the State Plan updates.



**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.9 (C) (4)**

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

FY2003 was an active year for increased collaboration related to supported employment. ORS Counselors work with the four “Disability Resource Specialists” employed by the One Stops to provide assistance to individuals with disabilities who utilize services at the centers. OJT options are considered when appropriate, expanding career choices for customers with disabilities. ORS collaborates with the Disability Resource Specialists to access OJT opportunities through WIA.

Collaboration with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP’s) related to implementation of the One-Stop Career Systems continues. ORS and CRP linkage is strengthened in implementation of the TWWIA funded grant to the RI Department of Labor and Training, *Work on the Rhode to Independence*. Through the development of Employer Service Network committees that include CRP’s, ORS and the Department of Labor and Training work together to improve employment services and outcomes resulting from the One-Stop System. Individuals with disabilities, through this collaboration, will have greater access to the One-Stop system, including benefits planning.

ORS participates in a “Supported Employment Advisory Council” convened by the Department of Mental Health Retardation and Hospitals (MHRH), Division of Behavioral Health that includes mental health providers, consumers, families, and staff from the Sherlock Center for Disabilities. The purpose of the Supported Employment Advisory Council is to provide the impetus for the community mental health system to move from center-based day program to community-integrated employment. The Sherlock Center has organized Employment Specialist Training modules, and ORS participates as trainers and trainees.

The Third-Party Cooperative Agreement with the Department of Mental Health Retardation and Hospitals (MHRH) promotes a coordination of services leading to integrated employment outcomes and provides a focus and coordination opportunity with the Third-Party Cooperative Agreement with the RI Department of Education (RIDE). The MHRH Agreement defines a special focus on services to youth with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses including provision of peer support and community opportunities for work experience prior to exiting school. Negotiations are underway in FFY2003 to define the ORS role in the provision of transition services to students with developmental disabilities through a “Transition Academy”. Also, through the Agreement the Employment Information Network a group of individuals with disabilities who are a “speaker’s bureau”, provide a vehicle for peer supports for youth and adults with disabilities to access and make informed choices about vocational rehabilitation services leading to employment.

ORS staff are involved in providing leadership training to youth with disabilities through the Youth Leadership Forum that brings together partners such as the RI Parent Information Network, Independent Living Centers, Educational Collaboratives, RIDE, and other school personnel to build youth leaders in the community.

**ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.11 (b)**

**COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT**

FFY2003 continued to focus on the process of achieving CSPD standards for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. RI (c) has a total FTE of ninety-two which includes forty VR Counselor I and VR Counselor II positions. Since October 1, 2002, three Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors vacancies occurred and three have been filled by individuals with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, and we anticipate that this will be the case with the current vacancies which amount to five. Over the next five years, ORS anticipates that a significant number of personnel (senior management, management, and counseling) will be retiring. ORS provides opportunities for leadership development whenever possible. Staff are afforded the opportunity to participate in such activities as the State Plan development, 107 Review conducted annually by RSA, and participation in other agency work groups, participation in RCEP advisory committees and other training opportunities.

One VR Counselor with a Master's Degree in Psychology completed her CSPD requirements, and two Senior Rehabilitation Counselors continue progress in meeting CSPD related to their similar degrees by taking core courses. The two RCDs' are both actively participating in a Master's Degree program to complete their CSPD plans. One is in the program held at Assumption College, and one is enrolled in the local Satellite program, developed collaboratively by ORS and Assumption College.

Currently there are six VR counselors who have active CSPD plans. All other VR counselors meet the CSPD standard of a Masters Degree in Rehabilitation, which is the entry level requirement for any VR counselor at ORS. This means that of the thirty-five counselor positions that are presently filled, twenty-nine meet the standard, or eight-two (82%) percent. In addition, all VR Supervisors meet the CSPD standard.

*Rhode Island Combined  
FFY 2004  
Annual Update to State Plan*

ORS makes every effort to hire based on affirmative action policies. ORS has hired a number of qualified individuals with disabilities (visual impairments, deafness). All materials are provided to them in accessible format. Interpreters and CART reporters are provided to ensure full participation of staff with disabilities in all training, and staff meetings.

The Bi-Lingual Health Representative position was filled early in 2002 and helped to develop approaches and linkages to Hispanic individuals with disabilities. The position primarily worked to bridge access to transition services but also assisted with SBVI services, orientations, and outreach efforts in general. The position again became vacant in May 2002, and although there are hiring restrictions imposed by State budget limitations, advocacy efforts are continuing in FY2003 to fill this important liaison position.

In May, 2002, the position of Training Coordinator was filled by a Supervisor who has the lead function to implement the Ticket to Work initiative for the VR program. This Supervisor also coordinates an SSA-awarded grant for Benefits Planning and Outreach. Ticket to Work and the Benefits Planning and Outreach are a training focus for FY2003 and throughout FY2004 to enhance the Agency's response strategies to increased inquiries and referrals, and employment services and informed choice for the individuals with the most significant disabilities who receive SSI or SSDI benefits. In addition, this Supervisor has queried staff about training and performance needs and is developing programs that will address these needs.

An in-house training program for new staff, implemented in 2001, continues to offer new staff opportunities to expand learning about specific vocational rehabilitation issues (values, independent living, assistive technology, benefits, medical, ethics, confidentiality, programs, the State Rehabilitation Council, transition, etc.) and to provide options for staff to maintain their CRC. Subject experts, either in-house or through other community resources, provide this mandatory training. We will continue to build upon and improve this training program during FY 2004.

A focus on employment-related training was made through offering staff specific sequential training in Labor Market Information and in using the WWW for job search and placement. In addition, 25 counselors and managers participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Partnership to Employment Conference, which focused on employment-related topics and the building of relationships with employers. Also, the RI VR agency participated with the RCEP plan to implement training on Confidentiality and Ethics for all staff in January, 2003.

The Information Services Technician manages the web page, has developed alternate format expertise, develops information tools, and participates with other staff in improving the implementation of informed choice for customers of the VR program. With her skills, ORS is able to ensure that all information disseminated to staff with disabilities as well as to customers is available in an appropriate format. Specific training in information technology processes has been provided to the Information Services Technician.

In an effort to enhance supervisory and management skills, two Supervisors have participated in management training offered by the state training office and a third is scheduled to begin this training in May. Eleven Supervisors participated in a 3 session training seminar on Enhancing Employee Performance. The plan to enhance clinical supervision as the main strategy to increase quality employment outcomes continues. During 2003, Administrators continue to meet individually on a quarterly basis with each Regional Supervisor to evaluate regional and individual approaches to achieving outcomes.

ORS Office Manager participates in the Region 1 RCEP's Planning Committee for annual training program activities for VR support personnel.

Through the Cooperative Agreement with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), ORS counselors participate in cross-training to enhance their knowledge and skills with students transitioning from school to post school life. The

ORS Assistant Administrator/ Transition Coordinator has been a member of the Continuous Improvement Management Plan (CIMP) to assist RIDE with its assessment and planning for school improvement.

In all, staff participated in one or more training opportunities to enhance skills or professional growth.

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12(a)**

**RESULTS OF STATE WIDE ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS**

The ORS has made progress in FFY2003 related to addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities as articulated in the five-year plan. Needs remain the same. A customer satisfaction study was completed in March 2002 in partnership with the SRC Quality Assurance Committee. The study indicated many areas of strength in the responsiveness and services by ORS staff and an overall satisfaction level of the customers surveyed. Needs were identified related to enhancing opportunities for choice and providing clearer explanation of services.

Informed Choice and Resource Development: The ORS, however, continues to focus on an area of need related to increasing opportunities for choices in determining services and in achieving employment. ORS and the SRC have continued to focus on informed choice during 2003. Consumer-friendly information that includes Fact Sheets and decision-making guides have been, and continue to be, developed or revised and included on the web site. Links on the homepage to training resources that have been approved by the DHS and netWORKri system will improve choice. ORS electronic systems have organized vendors according to geographic regions in order for Counselors to assist customers with local resources. The Community Rehabilitation Specialist has developed new resources both in the CRP area, including enhancing the provision of supported employment services to deaf individuals and other individuals with significant disabilities, and with short-term training and ESL programs to improve services to culturally diverse clients. The Agency's Fee Schedule has been revised to be an improved tool for person-centered planning and informed choices for customers. The fee schedule can be accessed at the ORS website. The ORS Information Services Technician has installed JAWS software so she can ensure that written material is readable to individuals with visual disabilities.

Resource Expansion for Individuals who are Blind and Visually Impaired: This continues to be a needed area. However in 2002, a new psychologist who provides access

for individuals with vision impairments was engaged to provide services to RI clients through Fee for Services. SBVI worked collaboratively with a RI program, In-Sight, to develop specific strategies to enhance services for this population, including the development of keyboard and computer training.

WIA and One-Stop System: The Disability Resource Specialists at the netWORKri Centers work closely with ORS customers and staff in Orientations and in job clubs. ORS staff actively participates in State and Local Workforce Investment Boards and Youth Councils.

Transition Planning: Transition is a high priority for the ORS and the SRC. In 2003, the ORS Assistant Administrator has been appointed to the duties of the Transition Coordinator, underscoring the significance of transition of students with disabilities from school to post school life. The ORS Assistant Administrator/Transition Coordinator is involved in the statewide school improvement plan with the RIDE. ORS is represented and actively involved in both Youth Councils, and involved in the RFP and grant review process to ensure access opportunities for youth with disabilities.

ORS provides coordinated technical assistance to school systems by participating in regional Transition Advisory Committees and in Leadership Workshops sponsored by the RIDE. Consultation evaluation and community-based employment planning services are provided to students in coordination with the School districts and the regional Transition Centers. In 2003 the Transition Coordinator at ORS worked with transition staff to develop materials to enhance the uniform message regarding how to access ORS services for students, schools and families, and to develop success stories and examples how ORS services after a student leaves the school system.

Through the Transition Coordinator and CRP Specialist, pilot programs have been developed in Regional Educational Collaboratives to provide seamless services to students who are exiting the schools systems but still need supports in order to successfully transition to employment.



Three of the five regional collaboratives have opted to provide these additional vocational services to students who require help to achieve their employment goals. To date, after one year, approximately six students have benefited from this pilot project.

Both third-party cooperative agreements with RI Department of Education (RIDE) and MHRH have been renewed for 5 years and are coordinated together with focus on services for transitioning students.

In 2003, ORS is developing a pilot program with a Transition Academy to expand the provision of vocational assessment and job development services for students with developmental disabilities. The anticipated number of students to access this program is approximately ten to twelve. Since their needs are intense, it is thought that a larger number could not be accommodated satisfactorily.

ORS's role in this project has yet been finalized, but it is expected that by October 1, 2003, a definite plan will be in place.

Employment Options: In order to enhance ORS skills in assisting customers who choose Self Employment as the career goal, specific training has taken place in developing business plans and in self-employment. A Self-Employment Fact Sheet and worldwide web links to resources through the ORS web site will be implemented in 2003.

Renewed emphasis has been given to OJT for potential job-ready individuals. On-the-job training monies have been accessed to enhance the opportunity to obtain employment of the individual's choice.

TANF: The ORS/DHS Learning Disabilities Project continues to be a nationally recognized program serving individuals in the Rhode Island Family Independence Program (FIP). The LD Project assists individuals on FIP with learning disabilities

towards economic self-sufficiency, independence and integration into society. The LD Project is an intra-agency collaborative effort between staff at the Department of Human Services and staff at the Office of Rehabilitation Services. FFY 2002 saw the most successful year to date in the history of the LD Project in terms of numbers of individuals identified with learning disabilities, number of individuals served, and number of individuals with disabilities whom have been successfully employed. Results for FFY2003 are not yet available. LD Project staff also provided training to all DHS social caseworkers and ORS liaison staff through the “Bridges to Practice” cross training curriculum program.

FFY 2002 results:

101 Individuals on FIP applied for services through the LD Project.

74 Individuals were tested and found eligible for services.

73 Individuals developed Individualized Employment Plans.

30 Individuals obtained and maintained employment.

Transportation: ORS and RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) are working closely with other state and local agencies to improve transportation options for individuals with disabilities to employment. A new transportation service was implemented in 2002 in a rural area of the state (Work Link), and a committee continues to work to implement a coordinated approach to travel training. RIPTA and ORS have collaborated on a transportation option fact sheet for customers and staff to assist in career planning.

Cultural Diversity Outreach: The Cultural Diversity Cadre continues to develop and implement action steps to provide services to cultural diverse clientele. Under resource enhancements above, the expansion of programs that ORS customers can access is addressed. The Bi-Lingual Health Representative position was filled early in 2002 and helped to develop approaches and linkages to Hispanic individuals with disabilities. The position primarily worked to bridge access to transition services but also assisted with SBVI services, orientations, and outreach efforts in general. The position again became

vacant in May 2002, and although there are hiring restrictions imposed by State budget limitations, advocacy efforts are continuing in 2003 to fill this important liaison position.

Mediation Update: ORS customers are provided with information about the availability of Mediation as an option to resolve disagreements regarding service provision, as well as their right to an Administrative Hearing. In FFY2003, there are six cases where mediation has been initiated, with one reaching satisfactory conclusion to date. One individual requested Mediation and an Administrative Hearing. The Mediation was held and an agreement was reached. Therefore, the individual withdrew the request for a hearing. One individual requested Mediation and an Administrative Hearing, but later waived the Mediation and then requested the Administrative Hearing be rescheduled twice. The hearing is now scheduled for 6/30/03. One individual refused Mediation and requested to continuances, therefore, the hearing is currently pending. One individual requested Mediation and an Administrative Hearing but in the mean time, ORS was able to identify a program that supplied the equipment the individual was requesting so they withdrew the request for Mediation and the Administrative Hearing.

ORS and the SRC are working together in on-going needs assessment in RI to ensure that the needs of individuals with disabilities are identified and met. To this end, again in 2003, the SRC and the ORS will be participating in Public Forums convened by the Governor's Commission on Disabilities. The Forums not only provide the public an opportunity to identify needs, but to offer the opportunity for networking and problem solving among several public agencies.

**ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.12(b)**

**ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED**

**COSTS OF SERVICES (PROJECTIONS FOR FY2004)**

- (1) Number of Individuals in the State who are eligible for services under this State Plan.

ORS projects a goal of 1800 applicants in FY 2004. Projected number of eligible applicants in 2004 is 1600. In FFY 2002 there was a 10% increase in referrals to 1,786 and there were 1571 eligible applicants.

- (2) Number of individuals who will receive services under Title I, Part B and Title VI Part B, and numbers to be served in each order of selection priority category.

In 2004, projected total number of clients (through both Title I, Part B and Title VI, Part B) to be served under an Individualized Plan for Employment is 2788, of which 2705 are significantly disabled.

Category 1 (Most significant disabilities) - 1941

Category 2 (Significant disabilities) - 764

- (3) Costs of services for projected total number of clients to be served, including service costs under each OOS category.

Average expenditure per client is \$1405. No significant change is expected in the short run.

Cost of services for OOS category #1 are estimated at \$2,727,105

Cost of services for OOS category #2 are estimated at \$1,073,420

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c) (1)**  
**STATE’S GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

No update required.

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c) (2) (A)**

**ORDER OF SELECTION**

Order of Selection will continue throughout 2003 and 2004. In 2004 Ticket to Work will be implemented in Rhode Island. The expectation is that referrals and applications will increase. Vacancies due to retirements and promotions are expected to result in staff vacancies. Without assurance that vacancies can be filled in a timely manner and that resources allotted to the State agency will increase, the Order of Selection needs to be in place in order to ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities receive the services they require in order to become employed.

Order of Selection Categories

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

Priority to Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities

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

State Definition of Individual with the Most Significant Disability

The term “individual with the most significant disability” means an individual:

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

*Rhode Island Combined  
FFY 2004  
Annual Update to State Plan*

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

For the foreseeable future, the Agency anticipates serving customers who meet the first two categories only of the Order of Selection (Category 3 is not expected to be served).

Projections are based on recent past performance of the Agency.

While the DSU seeks additional case service dollars to enable it to serve all eligible applicants, it has developed a method to assure that all persons assigned to the wait list receive information and referral services.

Projections for 2004:

OOS Category 1: 1941

OOS Category 2: 764

OOS Category 3: 100

**ANNUAL UPDATE - ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c) (3)**

**GOALS AND PLANS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION F TITLE VI, PART B, FUNDS**

Title VI Part B funds continue to be distributed through the Fee for Service mechanism with the emphasis on individually planned services and outcome based payments. The CRP Specialist continues TA sessions with vendors related to providing person-centered services in community integrated employment. Service expectations and definitions have been clarified through the Fee Schedule and through individual meetings and correspondence. New patterns of service have been initiated in FFY 2003. (See Attachment 7.3 for detailed information.)



**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12 (d)**

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

In FFY2003 Innovation and Expansion funds are being utilized to fund activities and projects of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). Recruitment for a new staff person was completed in 2003, upon the hiring of a qualified individual with the help of ORS counselors. The amount of \$27,000 will be earmarked for the position on a yearly basis. Other activities of the SRC that utilized I & E included quarterly meetings in a local hotel, a Leadership Retreat for the SRC, designing and administering the second tier of the customer satisfaction survey, and the annual Employer Honor Roll hosted by the SRC and ORS. These activities will be carried forth to 2004 also with I & E funds.

I & E funds were earmarked for the establishment of a new program at the RI School for the Deaf. 2003 is the second year of the project, with I & E funds earmarked for the third and final year in 2004.

The purpose of the initiative is to expand transition services and career options, including career exploration, career development and community-based work experiences, to transitioning students who are deaf. Many of these students are also from culturally diverse populations. This service option provides quality and timely services to better meet the employment preparation needs of students transitioning from high school, who are deaf.

Negotiations are underway with a regional educational collaborative and ORS to expand vocational services to students in transition who may require additional assistance in securing and maintaining employment. Job development, job placement, and time-limited job coaching services (which are not currently provided under the existing cooperative agreement) would be available through the use of I & E funds. The services would be initiated in FFY2004.

*Rhode Island Combined  
FFY 2004  
Annual Update to State Plan*

I & E funds have been utilized for the ORS sponsored Youth Leadership Forum in Rhode Island to build leadership skills and potential in youth with disabilities who are transitioning to adult life. This project will be repeated in 2003.

I & E funds are targeted to build the CRP linkage with the One-Stop System. In particular, the development of an Employer Service Network is a major strategy made up of CRP'S that enjoy benefits from the services of the One-Stop system.

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12(d) (1)**

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

Partnership Development with Employers, Community Rehabilitation Programs, One-Stop Career partners, and the SRC. A new staff person was hired in FFY2003 after a re-assessment of the needs of the SRC and an extensive recruitment process. The Customer Satisfaction Study was funded through I & E, as well as SRC Leadership development activities. I & E funds are utilized to sponsor the Employer Honor Roll, a celebration of employers to build and sustain employer partnerships.

I & E funds are targeted to build the CRP linkage with the One-Stop System. In particular, the development and fostering of an Employer Service Network is a major strategy made up of CRP's that will enjoy the benefits of the One-Stop System. This offers opportunities to individuals with disabilities to access netWORKri's employment services including ORS services and benefits planning.

The FIP/ORS LD Project has built upon the current partnership and case delivery services. Training and technical assistance continues through the development of a coordinated network of ORS and FIP staff to coordinate service delivery.

Assistive technology knowledge and resources are made available to ORS counselors and customers through the federally-funded Assistive Technology Access Partnership. In addition, ORS counselors may consult with an in-house rehabilitation technology specialist to ensure that ORS customers have informed choices about the AT they need.

Stronger partnerships have been developed with the public transportation system related to providing a broader array of transportation options to individuals with disabilities throughout the state. A new Work Link program was initiated in 2002 to provide employment transportation through the public transportation system in an

underserved area of the state. The Transportation Committee is now implementing a Travel Training system in the state. The Peer Travel Trainer whose program was previously initiated through I & E is working closely with RIPTA in this effort.

Communication tools are continually enhanced to provide greater access to individuals with disabilities. ORS has an Information Specialist to manage the electronic communication system through the WWW about ORS services. Forms and notices have been and continue to be revised to be person centered and understandable. All informational materials are available to ORS customers in accessible formats of their choice. All informational materials are also posted on the ORS website.

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12(d)(2)**

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

Expansion of Resources: ORS continues to seek out resources to provide access to services for customers of linguistic minorities, as we are aware that there are individuals with disabilities

A new relationship has been developed between the Genesis Center and ORS with the purchasing of a Food Training program. The program focuses on minorities who are in need of ESL supports. As the outcomes are reviewed, ESL classes will be explored. DORCAS Place is another vendor who will provide ESL training and other employment supports for minority customers. The Community College Spanish-English Center for Technology and Language has been added as a resource for ORS customers through fee-for-service arrangements.

The Cultural Diversity Cadre continues to meet monthly with active participation from all regions. Outreach is coordinated and building through this staff effort. ORS hired a Bilingual Health Representative in 2002. Although the individual is no longer employed at ORS, advocacy efforts are ongoing to fill this important position. AT&T lines are available at the front desk to assist in effective communication with customers who speak languages other than English.

Through the advocacy efforts of ORS staff, Goodwill, a provider of vocational assessment and job development services for ORS, has expanded its capacity to serve people who are Hispanic by hiring an evaluator and a job developer whose original language is Spanish. Therefore, the need for funding Spanish interpreters to benefit from their services has been eliminated. (Last year ORS funded interpreters there for 15 people for the evaluation stage primarily.) Only 7 other people received interpreter service this year.

*Rhode Island Combined  
FFY 2004  
Annual Update to State Plan*

ORS continues the process of translating documents into foreign languages as they are revised.

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4. 12 (d) (3)**

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

The Update for this section includes the updates in 4.12 (a), 4.12 (c) (1), 4.12 (d), (d) (1), (d) (2). Barriers related to benefits, transportation, informed choice, cultural barriers, employment options, and options for individuals with sensory impairments have been previously addressed.

Qualified ASL interpreters available in state colleges remain a need. In FFY2003, ORS has initiated the development of an MOU with the State colleges and university to ensure access to programs for students with disabilities, including interpreter services. In 2003, the Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CDHH) has assumed the responsibility for the interpreter referral service statewide. The ORS authorizes interpreter services through the CDHH. In addition, to ensure access, an MPA with Allied CART Reporting Services provided added access for customers and staff who are deaf and hard of hearing.

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 4.12(e)**

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

I & E funds are being utilized for a new program at the RI School for the Deaf. The program is currently operating in its second year (FFY2003), and will receive I & E funds for the third year (FFY2004). The purpose of this program is to expand transition services and career options, including career exploration, career development and community-based work experiences, to transitioning students who are deaf. Many of these students are also from culturally diverse populations. This new service option provides quality and timely services to better meet the employment preparation needs of students transitioning from high school, who are deaf.

I & E funds will also be utilized again in 2003 for the ORS sponsored Youth Leadership Forum, a new project in Rhode Island to build leadership skills and potential in youth with disabilities who are transitioning to adult life. There are approximately fourteen youths who will be participating in the program this year. Efforts will be made to maintain on-going contact with the participants in order to provide greater opportunity for leadership development.

I & E funds are targeted to build the CRP linkage with the One-Stop System. In particular the development of an Employer Service Network is a major strategy made up of CRP'S to enable them to access the services of the One-Stop system. This offers opportunities to individuals with disabilities to access netWORKri's employment services including ORS services and benefits planning.

I & E funds were earmarked for the enhancement of the SRC partnership, specifically in engaging a staff person to the SRC. The Staff Person left for full time employment, and the SRC revised the Scope of Work in 2002 for a new RFP, which has



culminated in the hiring of a new assistant in 2003. The Customer Satisfaction Study was funded through I & E, as well as SRC Leadership development activities.

**ANNUAL UPDATE – ATTACHMENT 7.3**

**QUALITY, SCOPE AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

Supported employment continues to be an important option for individuals with the most significant disabilities. During the previous fiscal year, seven hundred twenty-two (722) individuals with the most significant disabilities received Supported Employment services from ORS and the CRP's. Of that number, two hundred twenty-six (226) achieved a successful employment outcome, that is, competitively employed in an integrated setting.

The CRP Specialist is an active partner in the Supported Employment Advisory Council. The SE Advisory Council's mission is to improve community-based employment options for individuals with mental illness.

A new system of service delivery – the Supported Employment pilot project – a three-tier performance based system for supported employment started in FFY2003. Six vendors, four DD and two MH have agreed (a MOU) to be a part of the pilot project to explore the outcomes in the new system vs. outcomes from the current system both in terms of quality and quantity of employment outcomes. If results are positive, the pilot may be generalized across all supported employment vendors.