

Kansas Rehabilitation Services

State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation & Supported Employment Services Federal Fiscal Years 2011-2013

Attachment 4.11(a): Comprehensive statewide needs assessment

Numerous activities contribute to the ongoing assessment of the rehabilitation needs of Kansans with disabilities. These activities include the following:

- Director's Stakeholder Meetings, conducted annually.
- Consumer satisfaction survey, conducted annually.
- Input from vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors, managers and administrators, ongoing.
- Interagency coordination, ongoing.
- Review of priorities established by other organizations, ongoing.
- Focus groups and surveys with service providers, conducted periodically as warranted.
- Annual public hearings related to State Plan development and updates.
- Periodic analysis of population and service trends.
- Input and analysis provided through the State Rehabilitation Council, ongoing.

This Attachment represents a triennial assessment updated for the three-year period beginning FFY 2011.

In all needs assessment activities, attention is directed toward collecting information on the critical areas identified in the Rehabilitation Act.

- What are the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly the vocational rehabilitation service needs of:
 - Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services?
 - Minorities?
 - Individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by VR?
 - Individuals with disabilities served by other components of the statewide workforce investment system.
- What is the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state?

In addition, KRS collects information about barriers to employment, services needed to become employed, and the value of employment from the perspective of individuals with disabilities. Additional questions posed include:

- What strengths do you see in the present employment service delivery system for people with disabilities? What gaps or unmet needs do you identify?
- In thinking about your experience with vocational rehabilitation (VR), what has worked well? What has not? How can we improve?
- In thinking about your experience with the one-stop system, what has worked well? What has not?
- If you could design a process and services that would best assist people with disabilities to become employed, what would it include?

Stakeholder Meetings: In FFY 2010, meetings were conducted in six locations with a total of 176 persons participating. Recurring themes included:

- The need for more outreach and community informational meetings to build awareness about the VR program and services that can be provided.
- The importance of working with transition-aged youth with disabilities.
- The need for coordination of services for foster care youth with disabilities.
- Concerns about the economy and the impact of employment options for people with disabilities.
- Appreciation of counselors, coupled with some concerns about difficulty in being able to reach counselors by phone.
- Identification of persons with traumatic brain injury, persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders, and persons who are blind or visually impaired as potentially underserved populations.
- Identification of the need to incorporate emerging best practices related to services for persons with mental illness, and to improve staff skills related to assisting individuals with severe and persistent mental illness to participate in the VR process.

In addition to identifying the recurring themes listed above, many participants in the Stakeholder Meetings express appreciation for VR services or for the work of their VR counselors.

- Here's an example from a high school special education teacher: *"Our Rehab Services counselor is very supportive. He is accessible and*

consistent. I am a high school transition facilitator and he works well with our system."

- Here's an example from a military veteran injured in Afghanistan: *"My services really have been positive. Being a veteran and to get services means a lot. My experience has been great."*

The Stakeholder Meetings also revealed strong support for the KRS emphasis on competitive, integrated employment. Persons with disabilities spoke out at the meetings about the value of employment in their lives. Here's an example from a woman in Johnson County: *"Before I thought I had this label on me because I felt so different. Now in my job, other people actually look up to me instead of down. I never thought that would happen. I've got more respect than I ever have had in my life and it's wonderful."*

Satisfaction surveys: KRS and the State Rehabilitation Council continue to collaborate in distribution of consumer satisfaction surveys. Surveys were distributed in October 2009 to all current consumers, consumers whose cases had been closed in the previous six months, school personnel, service providers, advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders. This survey is based on the American Consumer Satisfaction Survey Index, which was recommended by RSA following a national study by the Research Triangle Institute. It is frequently used by other components of the workforce development system. In this method, answers are rated on a scale of 1 to 10. Scores of 5 or more represent the perspective of "more satisfied than not."

A total of 1,117 persons responded with the following overall results:

- Consumers: 7.1
- School personnel: 6.3
- Service providers: 6.7
- Advocates: 5.2

In addition, 420 respondents provided written comments along with answering the scored questions. Here is a summary of the nature of the written comments. Actual quotes are provided as examples only.

- VR services compliment: 22%
"I am very happy to have the opportunity to go through this program. I feel I have hope to be a productive part of society again. I am very thankful for my counselor!"
- VR counselor compliment: 16%

"My counselor helped me by discussing with me my disability needs and also explained how VR can help me reach my goals. He advised me, yet let me think and set my own goals. I appreciate his help."

- VR services complaint: 15%
"My counselor was happy to help, but I feel she dropped the ball sometimes. She's hard to get ahold of."
- Timeliness complaint: 11%
"My calls are returned weeks later. If procedures could move faster it would be helpful."
- Policy or service suggestion: 11%
"I don't like the process that considers a family's income in deciding whether my son's VR services will be paid for."
- Other: 16%
"I have no way to get around except by foot. I have no way to attend classes or get to work."
- Survey related comments: 9%

Employment First Summit/Conversation with the Governor's Cabinet:

Competitive, integrated employment was the theme of a unique meeting on April 16, 2010 that brought together people with disabilities, their families and service providers for a conversation with Cabinet-level representatives of 11 State agencies. More than 250 people attended the meeting, which was conducted at the direction of Governor Mark Parkinson. The purpose was to begin a dialogue about how to:

- Ensure that Kansans with disabilities have opportunities to achieve competitive, integrated employment.
- Create an expectation that people with disabilities will fully engage in employment.
- Change the culture to empower people with disabilities to consider employment as the pathway out of poverty.

Participants identified critical issues that impact their ability to become employed. Recurring themes including the following:

- The need for transportation to and from work, including transportation beyond the 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. hours to support employment in service industries or shift work.
- The importance of decent and affordable housing, and the link between stable housing and the ability to maintain employment.

- The feeling that paperwork required by various State programs can feel overwhelming and duplicative to people with disabilities and their families.
- The importance of school system and teachers in setting high expectations for children and youth with disabilities to achieve competitive integrated employment, rather than sheltered employment or “graduating to the family’s living room sofa.”
- The importance of reviewing policies, procedures, plans, contracts, funding priorities and staff training across all State agencies to reduce barriers to employment and leverage available resources to support competitive, integrated employment as the first priority.

State Plan public hearing: KRS conducted a public hearing to get input on the State Plan development on May 18, 2010. A total of 12 Kansas communities were connected via an interactive webcast, and 65 individuals participated.

There is a significant importance placed on serving transition-aged youth with disabilities, including both those in special education and those with 504 plans. The importance to build greater awareness of the VR program was also addressed.

Interagency coordination and review of priorities established by other organizations: To help identify unmet needs and potential service delivery strategies, KRS participates on numerous interagency and service coordination committees, and participates in collaborative service delivery. A partial list of these organizations includes:

- The Governor’s sub-committee on vocational services for persons with severe and persistent mental illness
- The Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns
- The Developmental Disabilities Planning Council
- The Statewide Independent Living Council
- Local transition councils
- The Head Injury Council
- The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning
- The Prairie Band Potawatomie Nation VR Program
- The Kansas Department of Education
- Local workforce investment boards
- The Kansas School for the Blind
- The Working Healthy Advisory Council
- The Disability Caucus
- United We Ride initiative for coordinated transportation services

KRS also maintains regular contacts with advocacy organizations. Contact with these groups contributes to our assessment of the service needs of Kansans with disabilities.

The foremost recurring theme identified through interagency coordination is the need for greater outreach and information to be available to individuals with disabilities about the VR program and services that can assist them to become employed. Parents of youth with disabilities, youth and school personnel need significant information to help them navigate access to VR services and a smooth transition from the public education to adult service delivery system. Often individuals involved in the developmental disability and mental health service delivery systems rely heavily on those programs for information about their employment options; therefore both those consumers as well as the service providers need information about the VR program.

The importance of benefits counseling to assist people with disabilities in analyzing the impact of work on benefits is often raised as an essential component to promoting employment as the avenue to self-sufficiency.

Finally, there is consensus among these groups regarding the importance of young people with disabilities having opportunities to gain work experience through part-time, after-school or summer jobs.

KRS performance compared to peer states: 2007 data provided from the "Core Tables" report provided by the Rehabilitation Services Administration shows the following performance related to access to services and outcomes for KRS compared to its federally-identified peer states:

- New applications per million in state population: KRS performance was 3,404 compared to the average from peer states of 2,543.
- The eligibility rate performance for KRS was 80.78% compared to an average of 82.91% from peer states.
- The plan rate performance for KRS was 56.74% compared to an average of 64.84% from peer states.
- The number of SSI recipients and SSCI beneficiaries achieving employment through KRS totaled 717, compared to an average of 596 in peer states.+

Demographics and population trends:

- Information from the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium identifies a total of 14,602 persons ages 16-20 with a disability in Kansas; and 192,334 persons aged 21-64 with a disability; for a total of 206,836 Kansans with disabilities (2008). This compares to a total

of 112,431 persons who reported that their disabilities impacted employment. In FFY 2011, Kansas Rehabilitation Services (KRS) projects that services will be provided for 17,308 individuals.

- The Statistics Compendium also reports interesting information about involvement of individuals ages 18-34 in college or graduate school. A total of 18% of persons with disabilities in this age group are enrolled; compared to 27.2% of persons who do not have disabilities. This discrepancy has significant implications for the importance of educational opportunities offered through the VR program.
- DCF Prevention and Protection Services identifies 398 youth with disabilities ages 16 to 18 in foster care as of March 31, 2010. This accounts for 40% of all foster care youth in this age group. In addition, a small number of individuals ages 18 or older are still receiving foster care services. Ten of the 17 individuals in this group, or 59% of the total, are youth with disabilities.
- The Kansas Department of Education reports a total of 66,219 youth with disabilities ages three to 21 in public and special purpose schools. Among the highest incidence of disability are: 2,545 persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders; 10,321 with developmental disabilities; 3,336 with emotional disturbance; 23,666 with learning disabilities; 3,994 with mental retardation; 7,526 with other health impairments; 12,719 with speech/language disabilities.
- Some rural areas are generally considered underserved due to the population scarcity and distance to available services and supports. A total of 55 of the 105 Kansas counties have a population density of 10 or fewer people per square mile.
- Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders are currently underserved by the VR program in comparison to the overall population. The Kansas Governor's Commission on Autism reports a growth rate of more than 500% in the school age population in the last nine years. The Department of Education, as noted above, reports a total of 2,545 youth with Autism ages 3-21. In FFY 2009, KRS served only 239 individuals with Autism.

Additional barriers to employment identified: Stakeholders identified several broad systems issues which go beyond the purview of VR alone: employment discrimination, the need for more qualified sign language interpreters, transportation, health care, housing, child care, and economic development.

One-stop workforce development system

The one-stop system is not currently seen as a primary source of services or

support for people with disabilities. A research study conducted by the University of Kansas found that providers within this system often were not well prepared to provide appropriate services or supports to job seekers with disabilities. Suggestions for improvement included staff training on how to interact with people with disabilities in empowering ways. The Disability Navigator program received very positive feedback in the Wichita area.

The need for establishing or developing community rehabilitation programs

When assessing the need for establishing, developing or improving community rehabilitation programs, KRS will be guided by whether services (individual programs as well as statewide systems) meet the following objectives:

- Involve persons with disabilities and the community in making best use of current resources according to local needs.
- Improve coordination of services.
- Demonstrate outcomes and accountability.
- Advocate for community inclusion.
- Contribute to the growth of quality transition planning services.
- Aid in the development of supported employment programs by maintaining quality standards.
- Increase outreach programs to meet the needs of individuals in underserved areas or for minorities.
- Create new service delivery strategies for unserved or underserved disability populations.
- Increase opportunities for competitive, integrated employment.

The needs assessment revealed the following common themes. There is a need for job placement and other provider services with specialized expertise in serving people who are blind or visually impaired. There is a need for additional supported employment and job coaching services. There is a need for environmental supports for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, to include greater access to sign language interpreting as well as access to service delivery staff who are able to sign directly to their consumers who are deaf.

The needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities for supported employment services

Annually about 9% of the total persons served (Status 02-24 +32) receive supported employment services. Individuals with severe and persistent mental illness, significant developmental disabilities, and traumatic brain

injury are among the primary populations receiving supported employment services.

Their services are characterized by:

- The need for community-based work assessments or similar job-related experiences so that individuals who have not previously worked can explore jobs that are a good match for their skills and interests.
- The importance of an individualized approach in connecting these individuals with: available social service and disability-related services; transportation; benefits counseling; and natural support networks in their home communities.
- The need for employability or soft skill training on issues such as self-advocacy, communications, taking direction from employers, getting along with co-workers and customer service.
- The need for specific job skill training matched with current and projected labor market needs.

When considering the entire disability service delivery system, identifying the source of extended supports continues to be an issue warranting further review and capacity building efforts, especially for individuals who cannot access such services through the state's network of community mental health centers and community developmental disability organizations.

Summary

The information collected from these needs assessment activities has been used as the basis for establishing goals and priorities to enhance services for people with disabilities. The FFY 2011-2013 goals and priorities developed as a result are reflected in Attachment 4.11(c)(1).