

## **Kansas Rehabilitation Services**

### **State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation & Supported Employment Services FFY 2011-2013**

#### **Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development**

The Kansas Rehabilitation Services (KRS) mission is: Working in partnership with Kansans with disabilities to achieve their goals for employment and independence. Qualified staff are an essential asset to the agency's ability to achieve this mission. Therefore, KRS has established a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development to assure that staff are well-qualified, take part in ongoing training to maintain expertise in the field of vocational rehabilitation, and are accountable through performance-based evaluations.

#### ***Data system on personnel and personnel development***

KRS maintains a system for collecting and reviewing information about the personnel who carry out the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program. The data includes the number of individuals currently employed, the number of positions vacant, the classifications of positions, and the educational qualifications of counselors. Sources for this data system include the state's personnel/payroll system, budget reports, and the KRS database on staff credentials.

As of April 29, 2011, KRS employs 84 vocational rehabilitation counselors who deliver basic Title I services through regional field offices. KRS projects that 18,610 individuals with disabilities will be served in FFY 2012, resulting in a counselor to consumer ratio of 1:222.

KRS also employs 10 rehabilitation managers who have supervisory responsibilities in regional offices and six program administrators who are responsible for directing the VR program in their regions. Other staff provide vocational assessment and rehabilitation teaching services. Positions in the general category of administrative assistants or clerical support are provided through the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS), which is the designated state agency.

#### ***Counselor qualifications***

KRS maintains a database about the educational qualifications/credentials of counselors. A total of 70 of the 84 counselors currently meet the requirements of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development. The

14 others are working to complete the necessary additional course work to meet the national educational standard associated with being CRC-eligible.

***Number of personnel needed***

To help determine personnel needs, KRS participates in an ongoing comprehensive study of staff caseloads conducted by SRS. The study measures workloads in SRS programs including vocational rehabilitation, child support enforcement, financial assistance for families, adult and protective services, and children and family services. Each staff person's caseload is compared to the average caseload within its own program. According to this analysis, the average vocational rehabilitation counselor active caseload as of April 1, 2010 was 118 persons. Staff in three SRS regions exceeded this average.

Looking at such average workloads is one tool that SRS, the designated state agency, uses in analyzing staff workloads and personnel requirements. Budget constraints, which impact all programs within SRS, such as appropriations for limited numbers of full-time equivalent staff, and the need to hold vacant positions open to avoid exceeding salary allocations, are significant factors which impact staffing levels.

*Note regarding the table below: Information is based on the number of personnel employed as of April 29, 2011. Projected vacancies over the next five years are based on a turnover rate of 10.4% per year for counselors/direct service staff and 8.5% per year for all other positions. Annual turnover is then multiplied by five to determine the projected vacancies that will occur over the next five years. This calculation simply projects the vacancies that will occur, and does not estimate the number of vacancies that will eventually be rehired or filled.*

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Administrative staff	23	4	10
2	Counselors	84	11	45
3	Staff supporting counselors	41	NA*	15
4				
5				

6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

\*Tracked by the DSA at the regional level only

***Institutions of higher education preparing VR professionals***

Emporia State University (ESU) currently offers a master's degree program in rehabilitation counseling. There are currently 22 students enrolled. ESU expects to graduate approximately four to eight individuals per year. ESU reports that two factors significantly limit student entry into the rehabilitation counseling discipline: the lack of federal stipends to support students in this curriculum; and equivalent wages are offered in mental health and alcohol/drug treatment positions, providing more competition in the labor market for qualified graduates. Three counselors employed by KRS are receiving support from the agency to attend Emporia State in order to meet CSPD standards. In addition, one counselor employed by the agency completed the ESU program in December 2010.

1	Institution	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
2	Emporia State University	22	3	1	6
3					
4					
5					

***Plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel***

KRS strives to fill vacant positions with well-qualified and diverse individuals. Vacancy postings clearly state the educational requirements consistent with the national CRC educational standard. Recruiting individuals who already meet the qualification standards has been a challenge, and numerous new hires must complete additional educational requirements.

In addition to the traditional advertising methods, Regional Program Administrators and Human Resource Personnel have made personal contacts with universities that have master's programs in rehabilitation counseling, have provided information to candidates about the geographical regions where vacancies exist, and have recruited candidates through specialized programs, such as programs for people who are deaf or hard of hearing or programs teaching service delivery for people who are blind.

Vacancy announcements are distributed to independent living centers and colleges that are traditionally minority institutions in order to encourage cultural diversity in the KRS workforce. Recruitment also occurs through professional, advocacy and service provider associations.

The Human Resources office in the DSA has developed a recruitment brochure and routinely represents KRS at various opportunities, including career fairs. KRS also posts vacant position announcements through a recruiting system for rehabilitation counselors at [www.experience.com](http://www.experience.com); such announcements are then distributed to more than 200 schools both regionally and nationally. Job vacancy announcements are also distributed directly to a listing of 30 masters level programs and programs specializing in the rehabilitation of individuals who are blind.

The following factors also influence the ability of KRS to recruit and retain qualified staff:

- The starting salary for a Human Services Counselor classification is \$1,465 bi-weekly.
- The graduate training program for rehabilitation counselors at Emporia State University anticipates only about four to eight master's level graduates in a year.
- The ability to fill vacant counselor positions continues to be impacted by the DSA's need to hold positions vacant to stay within the salary appropriations. Such action is consistent throughout all programs in the DSA.

## Personnel standards

KRS standards are consistent with the educational requirements established by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). Individuals who hold the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential or who have a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from a program accredited by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) meet the qualification standards.

In addition, individuals may be hire if they have advanced degrees in the numerous areas of study allowed by CRCC and agree to complete an integrated program of study focused on rehabilitation counseling coursework.

Such staff will be expected to complete the required coursework within seven years of the date of hire. Individualized counselor development plans are initiated and reviewed each quarter to assure that these individuals stay on target in meeting the required educational standards. These professional development plans are based on the following principles:

- Training is intended to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of rehabilitation counselors, thereby enhancing the provision of VR services and the quality of employment outcomes.
- Counselors may continue to perform all counselor functions during their training periods.
- In-service training grant funds may be used to help staff maintain compliance with the standards through the support of continuing education requirements.
- KRS will investigate and support non-traditional opportunities for training, including use of the Internet.
- KRS compliance with the standards will be reviewed annually, in consultation with the State Rehabilitation Council.

In addition to the CRC educational requirements, state personnel standards require the following knowledge, abilities and skills at entry into Counselor positions:

- Knowledge of the principles and techniques of counseling.

- Knowledge of the physical and psychological aspects of disability and human behavior.
- Knowledge of individual appraisal instruments and their applications.
- Knowledge of job analysis, job modification and rehabilitation engineering.
- Knowledge of agency policy and procedures.
- Ability to relate to and work effectively with persons with diverse disabilities.
- Ability to communicate effectively with a variety of people.
- Ability to review and evaluate information and to adapt trends and developments in the field to a practical program application.
- Ability to analyze medical, psychological, economic, social and academic information to formulate recommendations.
- Ability to evaluate personal and psychological characteristics, physical abilities, work background, potential capabilities and interests of the disabled individual and to interpret these in terms of their occupational significance.
- Ability to develop individual written plans for employment.
- Ability to use reference materials on disability to guide eligibility decisions and rehabilitation plan development.
- Ability to use computer technology with accommodations as needed, to complete job duties.

### ***Review by the State Rehabilitation Council***

The Council periodically reviews and provides guidance on counselor qualifications and evaluations.

### ***Staff development***

KRS will continue to develop, implement and maintain a professional development system for new and experienced staff. A priority focus area will be to address effective development and implementation of Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs). This training will incorporate best practices for consumer engagement and informed choice; understanding the purpose and intent of the VR program; linkages between eligibility, rehabilitation needs, consumer goals and priorities, and services provided; development of effective progress measures; time and caseload management techniques; and financial accountability. Other focus areas of interest continue to be cultural competence; accountable decision-making; expertise related to disability populations served (specifically persons who are blind or visually impaired, persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders, persons with mental illness, and persons with head injury); leadership development; use of comparable benefits; basic benefits counseling issues surrounding employment; and effective career counseling and guidance related to employment as the avenue to self-sufficiency.

In addition, the in-service training grant goals include the following:

- The in-service training program will support KRS efforts to comply with quality service standards, outcome expectations, federal regulations, state policy, caseload management, documentation requirements, and the corrective action plan.
- The training program will also support KRS efforts to comply with the CSPD regulatory requirements.
- Training will continue on effective working relationships with employers in order to secure meaningful, gainful employment for people with disabilities.
- Cultural diversity training will be emphasized for all staff.
- Rehabilitation trends, including effective use of assistive technology and the impact of poverty, will be kept in the forefront.

As part of the planning process for the in-service training grant, KRS periodically conducts a staff training needs assessment. The assessment looks at individual, unit and agency needs. Input from public forums and the State Rehabilitation Council also contributes to the needs assessment for staff training and development.

### ***Dissemination of information and research***

Numerous strategies assure that information about research, best practices, trends, and state agency policies and procedures are distributed to staff statewide. KRS maintains both public and internal web sites which post information on agency policies and service provider agreements. Links to state and national rehabilitation research sites are included. The Central Office makes reference/resource library information, including the publications of the Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, available to staff statewide. KRS has used technology, such as statewide web casts with live audio and video, to conduct staff meetings and trainings.

### ***Evaluating the performance of counselors and other personnel***

Staff are evaluated annually using the process and forms prescribed by the DSA. Each staff member's position description is a primary source document for the evaluation system. The position description explains the staff member's duties and responsibilities related to the KRS mission, including the emphasis on serving people with the most significant disabilities.

In FFY 2010, KRS implemented a new Performance Management System. This system established consistent counselor performance standards related to quality and policy compliance reflected through case reviews; timeliness for eligibility and IPE development; the number of new IPEs developed; the number of consumers rehabilitated; and the rehabilitation rate. Competencies related to professional conduct, timely responses to consumer and other inquiries, and effective caseload management are also included in this new performance management process. Consistent standards were also established for supervisors and administrators.

### ***Personnel to address individual communication needs***

The Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired unit of KRS provides a full range of special media options and accommodations. Counselors with expertise in serving people who are blind or in serving people who are deaf or hard of hearing are stationed throughout the state. The Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing provides support to staff and consumers statewide. Foreign language interpreting is provided as needed. The KRS Handbook of Services, application for services, and informational brochures have been translated into Spanish and Vietnamese. These translations are also posted on the KRS website.

When accommodations cannot be provided by staff directly, services may be contracted through a private individual or organization, such as a sign

language interpreter or foreign language interpreters. When appropriate, family members may assist with communication if that is the consumer's informed choice.

***Coordination of personnel development under the individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act***

A Memorandum of Understanding between KRS and the Kansas Department of Education addresses the intention to share staff training resources and to facilitate cross-informational training among special education and rehabilitation staff.