

Kansas Rehabilitation Services

State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation & Supported Employment Services Federal Fiscal Years 2014-2016

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.
- Consumer satisfaction survey.
- 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 2014.

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 November and December 2012, the KRS Director conducted Stakeholder Meetings in Topeka, Overland Park, Wichita, Chanute, Hays and Garden City. A total of 176 persons participated.

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 need for specific outreach to employers regarding the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.
- The importance of working with transition-aged youth with disabilities, and of clarifying the services that KRS can provide while the individual is still in school.
- Concerns about the economy and the impact of employment options for people with disabilities.
- Concerns about difficulty in being able to reach counselors by phone, and lengthy processes to initiate services in some regions.
- Identification of persons with traumatic brain injury, persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders, and persons who are blind or visually impaired as potentially underserved populations.
- Concerns regarding the number of counselors employed by KRS, delays in refilling vacant counselor positions, and the capacity of the program to provide efficient, effective services. A related suggestion was to establish new provider agreements to supplement the work done by KRS counselors. Another related suggestion was to look at using technology to make business processes more efficient.
- Positive feedback for the competitive, integrated employment focus of the Great Expectations Initiative, a system change effort to promote employment for people with the most significant intellectual disabilities

as an alternative to non-work day services, waiting lists, or sheltered employment.

- Identification of the need for more skilled job development, supported employment and job coaching service providers.

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

- Here's an example from an individual attending college leading to career-track employment through VR: *"Voc rehab has helped me better improve myself, helped me figure out who I am as a person and go from there."*
- Here's an example from a client in southeast Kansas: *"My counselors have done an exceptional job. The program exceeded my expectations. I didn't know what to expect to start with, and they are doing an exceptional job."*

Satisfaction surveys: A satisfaction survey was distributed in November 2012 to all current consumers, consumers whose cases had been closed in the previous six months, school personnel, service providers, advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders.

The survey is based on the American Consumer Satisfaction Index, which measures three dimensions of satisfaction: overall satisfaction, satisfaction compared to expectations, and satisfaction compared to the ideal. This method was recommended by the Rehabilitation Services Administration following a national study by the Research Triangle Institute. It is frequently used by other components of the workforce development system.

A total of 1,115 individuals returned survey responses, resulting in a 9.5% response rate. Answers are rated on a scale of 1 to 10. Scores of 5 or more represent the perspective of "more satisfied than not." Comparisons to survey scores from 2007 and 2009 are provided in the table below.

Demographic group	2007*	2009	2013
Consumers	5.7	7.1	6.9
School personnel	5.7	6.3	8.7
Service providers	5.7	6.7	6.8
Advocates	5.7	5.2	5

*Only the overall score was calculated in 2007.

In FFY 2013, 292 of the survey respondents chose to provide written comments in addition to answering the scored questions. Some individuals commented on more than one topic. Here's a brief summary of the most frequent topics. Actual quotes are provided as examples only.

Counselor compliments: 54 comments

"The whole VR staff is wonderful. I love my counselor. She truly takes an active interest and supports me in all my goals and achievements. I know she is always a phone call or e-mail away and she has a great response time."

Counselor concerns: 105 comments related to returning phone calls, lack of follow-through, overall communications and courtesy.

"I don't feel they listened to me."

"I never heard back on questions I asked."

Agency concerns: 54 comments on timeliness

"After the initial meeting it has been a slow process."

"I would like to see a much better response time, more flexibility in scheduling appointments and more creativity in vocational training and supports."

Agency concerns: 27 comments on program capacity

Not enough staff.

Turnover – one parent noted her son had four different counselors in less than a year.

Agency compliments: 61 comments

"Vocational rehabilitation has given me a new lease on life, and helps me feel productive, and some purpose and meaning to my life."

"Without your help I would not be attending college."

Issues not specific to VR: A total of 22 comments were received on issues that are not specifically the purview of KRS. These issues included transportation, health care, employment discrimination, cost of living, housing, child care, and community accessibility.

Key stakeholder interviews: As part of this needs assessment, KRS conducted key stakeholder interviews with numerous organizations in the position of assessing the employment-related needs of Kansans with disabilities. They included: the Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns, Working Healthy Medicaid-Buy-In, Assistive Technology for Kansans, the physical disabilities HCBS waiver program, the Developmental Disabilities Council, Addiction and Prevention Services, Mental Health Services, the Kansas Association of Centers for Independent Living, the workforce development system in the Kansas Department of Commerce, the Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. In addition, a survey was conducted of vocational rehabilitation counselors, managers and administrators in field offices.

Multiple participants identified the following populations as potentially underserved by KRS: persons with traumatic brain injury, persons on the Autism Spectrum, transition-aged youth with disabilities, and persons who are blind. The need for increased staff expertise and capacity was identified related to serving persons with mental illness, persons with substance abuse issues, people with disabilities with criminal backgrounds, persons with the most significant intellectual disabilities, and persons who are chronically homeless.

Recurring themes included the following: *(Please note that not all themes identified here relate exclusively to the responsibilities of VR.)*

- The need for youth with disabilities to be employed in real jobs before making career decisions, including the need for youth to have employment-focused services prior to exit from secondary school.
- Incentives for employers to hire more individuals with disabilities.
- Funding for long-term support after VR case closure.
- The need for additional service providers.
- Funding throughout the disability service delivery system that focuses on competitive, integrated employment rather than congregate settings.
- 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..

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 Behavioral Health Planning council and its sub-committee on vocational services for persons with severe and persistent mental illness
- The Kansas Commission on Disability Concerns
- The Statewide Independent Living Council of Kansas
- The Prairie Band Potawatomie Nation VR Program
- The Kansas Department of Education
- Local workforce investment boards
- The Working Healthy Advisory Council
- The Assistive Technology Advisory Committee

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.

Demographics and population trends:

- Information from the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium identifies a total of 177,640 individuals with disabilities ages 18 to 64 in Kansas.
- DCF Prevention and Protection Services identifies 398 youth with disabilities ages 16 to 18 in foster care as of March 31, 2013. This

accounts for 53% of all foster care youth in this age group. In addition, 84 individuals with disabilities ages 18 or older are still receiving foster care services representing 66% of this group.

- The Kansas Department of Education reports a total of 67,136 youth with disabilities ages three to 21 in public and special purpose schools. Among the highest incidence of disability are: 3,007 persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders; 11,033 with developmental disabilities; 2,926 with emotional disturbance; 23,469 with learning disabilities; 3,426 with mental retardation; 7,327 with other health impairments; and 13,678 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 3,007 youth with Autism ages 3-21. In FFY 2012, KRS served only 373 individuals on the Autism Spectrum.

One-stop workforce development system

In several communities, KRS counselors have regularly scheduled itinerant work hours at **KANSASWORKS** workforce development system offices. In Wichita, one counselor is co-located on a full-time basis. KRS Program Administrators are members of Local Workforce Investment Boards, and these relationships encourage sharing of program information and collaboration. KRS staff also encourage consumers to register with the workforce system for available job opportunities and other services, such as assistance in developing professional resumes. **KANSASWORKS** reports that the workforce development system served 2,900 persons with disabilities during the past year. It is not currently known if any of these individuals were also receiving VR services. A new program being launched in FFY 2013 will increase collaboration and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. **KANSASWORKS** and KRS are working together to implement the Employer Partner Incentive Program which is funded with 100% State General Funds. Employers may receive incentive payments for hiring and retaining VR clients who are also eligible for KanCare (Medicaid).

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 with their consumers who are deaf.

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

Annually about 10% of the total persons served (Status 02-24 +32) receive supported employment services. Individuals with severe and persistent mental illness, significant intellectual 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 job tryouts in competitive, integrated employment 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 2014-2016 goals and priorities developed as a result are reflected in Attachment 4.11(c)(1).