

***Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities***

North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation conducts a comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs every three years. Together with the State Rehabilitation Council's Evaluation Committee and research analysts from the designated state agency's research team, DVR began planning for the FFY 2013-2015 assessment in 2011. The next comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) will be completed for the FFY 2016 state plan. The results of the CSNA will be used to develop goals, priorities, strategies and actions for both DVR's State and Strategic Plans.

In November/December of 2011, DVR completed a series of assessment activities to determine the employment service needs of individuals with disabilities. These activities included: surveys to DVR consumers; representatives of organizations that provide employment services to individuals with disabilities; people advocating for individuals with disabilities; and individuals with disabilities that could benefit from employment-related services. Activities also included environmental scan of data from sources such as the American Community Survey, the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, and the Current Population Survey. This information was analyzed and the report was completed in February 2012.

There was a total of 1,000 consumer needs survey questionnaires sent to individuals with disabilities. In addition, a press release invited interested parties to participate in the survey. Both a paper-based and online version of the survey was provided to give respondents flexibility in completing the survey. A total of 242 consumer needs surveys were returned.

A total of 204 questionnaires were sent to advocates. These individuals were chosen based on their role with certain agencies or as a member of boards, advisory councils and committees who are connected to, and advocate for, individuals with disabilities. This included advocacy groups, disability organizations, Client Assistance Program, SRC and Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) members, Centers for Independent Living, various state agencies, 121 projects, and VR staff. Both a paper-based and online version of the survey was provided to give respondents flexibility in completing the survey. A total of 104 Advocate surveys were returned.

In addition, a total of 164 questionnaires were sent to individuals and directors of institutions and agencies chosen because of their likelihood to have a connection with or interest in individuals with disabilities. This included community rehabilitation programs, supported employment providers, psychosocial rehabilitation centers, disability support services in the North Dakota University System, occupational therapy departments and directors of special education. Both a paper-based and online version of the survey was provided to give respondents flexibility in completing the survey. A total of 43 CRP provider surveys were returned.

For all surveys, responses were received from every region in the state with higher populated regions taking a greater share. Descriptive statistics and qualitative methods were applied for data analysis.

Also, the North Dakota Department of Human Services conducted a stakeholder survey seeking public input about human service needs and issues in November 2011. DVR was one of the programs addressed in the survey and the results were therefore incorporated into this assessment.

DVR performs an ongoing analysis of data. There are monthly reports created that show progress towards employment goals, number served, number of referrals, rehab rate and percent with significant disabilities. In addition, quarterly reporting also tracks goals for Business Services Older Blind, Client Satisfaction surveys and results of follow-up surveys conducted with individuals whose cases closed successfully. This follow-up survey tracks job retention six months after closure which is at least nine months after employment began. It also serves as an opportunity to assess if any post-employment services might be needed at that time. This on-going analysis is used to identify trends which then generally require further analysis. As a result, we performed a deeper analysis of closures prior to the development of the employment plan. In addition, we have been working on revamping the vocational development process and have developed an outcome based system that is paid at a flat rate at the completion of different steps in the process.

Overall, irrespective of disability status, the most important unmet employment related needs were identified as assistance with finding and/or keeping a job, vocational guidance and benefits planning. Transition services were also important to CRPs and Advocates.

Of the 242 individuals with disabilities who completed the survey, the most commonly identified employment need not being met was assistance with finding and/or keeping a job (19.1%). Other highlighted needs were vocational guidance (16.9%) and benefits planning (16.0%).

Transition-age respondents did not have strongly ranked employment needs; none of the employment needs were above twenty percent, instead the employment needs that were unmet were spread throughout the choices. As with the others, benefits planning and assistance with finding and/or keeping a job was listed in their top three employment needs. Transition-age respondents had a lower average number of

employment service needs not being met than respondents 25 years of age and older (1.3 compared to 1.9). However, a higher percentage of transition-age respondents (16.3%) say their employment needs are never met than respondents 25 years of age and older (8.1%).

The table below contains the major rehabilitation needs identified during the 2013-2015 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment with the most predominant needs at the top.

The needs include those identified by or on behalf of individuals with all types of disabilities including individuals with the most severe disabilities, minorities, individuals who may be underserved and individuals served through the state’s Workforce Investment System. Individuals who are considered underserved are frequently individuals who have a mental illness and those who have traumatic brain injuries.

The rehabilitation needs cut across all types and “categories”. No needs were unique to any one of the groups for whom this assessment was conducted. Rather, the unique needs are identified with each individual during the vocational rehabilitation process.

Many of the major rehabilitation needs are systemic in nature and apply one way or another to every individual with a disability who receives VR services.

<b>Rehabilitation Need</b>	<b>Most Severe Disability</b>	<b>WIA</b>	<b>Unserved &amp; Underserved</b>	<b>Minorities</b>
Assistance with Finding and/or Keeping a Job	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vocational Guidance and Counseling	✓	✓	✓	✓
Benefits Planning	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increased Opportunities for Self-Employment	✓	✓	✓	✓
On-The-Job Training	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supported Employment (SEP)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Workplace Relationship Training	✓	✓	✓	✓
Housing	✓	✓	✓	✓

Assistive Technology	✓		✓	✓
Physical and Mental Restoration Services	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transportation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Extended Services	✓	✓	✓	✓
Independent Living Skills Training	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transition Services – Youth to Adult	✓	✓	✓	✓
Interpreter Services	✓		✓	✓

Based on information from the Department of Public Instruction in 2011, there are 700 students in Special Education who are between the ages of 18-21. These individuals could potentially receive supported employment or Title 1 services during the next one to three years. Some of the major disability categories of these students include the following:

Specific Learning Disabilities .....	250
Intellectual Disabilities .....	170
Other Health Impairment .....	100
Autism .....	71
Severe Mental Illness/Emotional Disturbance.....	42
Sensory Impairments.....	38
Orthopedic Impairment .....	17
Traumatic Brain Injury .....	6
Vision Impairment.....	3
Hearing Impairment.....	2
Deaf-Blind .....	1

## ***Assessment of the Need to Establish, Develop or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs***

As part of the 2013 - 2015 Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs, a total of 164 CRP needs survey questionnaires were sent to individuals and directors of institutions and agencies chosen because of their likelihood to have a connection with or interest in individuals with disabilities. This included community rehabilitation programs, supported employment providers, psychosocial rehabilitation centers, Disability Support Services in the North Dakota University System, occupational therapy departments, and directors of special education. A total of 43 CRP provider surveys were returned. In addition a total of 204 questionnaires were sent to advocates. These individuals were chosen based on their role with certain agencies or as a member of boards, advisory councils and committees who are connected to, and advocate for, individuals with disabilities. This included advocacy groups, disability organizations, Client Assistance Program, SRC and Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) members, Centers for Independent Living, various state agencies, 121 projects, and VR staff. A total of 104 Advocate surveys were returned.

Both a paper-based and online version of the survey were provided to give respondents flexibility in completing the survey. Responses were received from every region in the state with higher populated regions taking a greater share. Descriptive statistics and qualitative methods were applied for data analysis.

The surveys were designed to enable a comparison between Community Rehab Programs' responses and non-CRP responses to the same set of questions. Questions included met and unmet employment-related needs, barriers encountered by CRPs and allowed for suggestions for improving services and removing barriers.

### *Unmet Needs:*

CRPs identified Benefits Planning and Transition employment services as being at the top of the list of unmet needs, followed by assistance with finding and/or keeping a job. Advocates indicated assistance with finding and/or keeping a job was the most significant unmet need.

The benefits planners are extremely important to individuals with disabilities and to provide program managers and provider staff with training on available resources so that maximum access is available to those who would benefit.

Due to the initial discontinuation of the WIPA program, the number of benefits planners in the state had decreased from three to one with DVR funding that position. Funding for the WIPA program was reinstated. As a result, ND has two benefits planners.

There were concerns regarding the need for transition services to start at an earlier age with more comprehensive career planning.

DVR is collaborating with state agencies and community partners, including the Department of Public Instruction, to implement transition activities and to develop tools and strategies to better assist student's transition from school to work or college. DVR is also actively participating in the Community of Practice workgroups and is providing support and technical assistance to meet local needs. *Goal 2 Strategies 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4*

There continues to be struggle with the quality of employment for people with the most significant disabilities.

About 71% of the larger CRPs stated they provide job placement and follow up. In addition, an additional 64% provide SEP.

There will be continued education and awareness activities for the business community, lawmakers, service providers, educators, family members, and the general public. DVR will also continue to work with Extended Services Funding sources to ensure individuals are able to utilize SEP and access supports once the DVR case is closed. *Attachment 6.3*

*Barriers:*

CRPs felt that funding for agency operations and services was the most significant barrier to their ability to provide employment related services followed by community perception of individuals with disabilities and geographic location of or distance to individuals. Advocate respondents had similar thoughts, however, indicated that funding for extended services was the most significant barrier, followed by funding for agency operations and services with community perception and geographic location tied in third place.

Comments were made about the need for better training and reimbursement for staff who serve individuals with the most significant disabilities as well as funding for SEP/Extended services and job coaching.

DVR continues to use the TACE in Colorado as a training resource when training needs are identified, including any training needs that may emerge as a result of provider outcome data. Current training available to Community Rehabilitation Providers includes: monthly video conference training on various topics, DVR 101, and National Employment Certification through TACE. *Attachment 4.8(b)(3)*

Two workgroups were established to review and update SEP Guidelines and Vocational Development services. Based on their recommendations, a standardized fee for these services was established. *Attachment 4.8(b)(3)* In addition, DVR will be partnering with the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse to develop strategies which will increase the use of transitional employment, customized employment and other supported employment strategies. *Goal 4 Strategies 4.1 and 4.2*

There were comments made that there needs to be more community education to reduce the stigma of hiring individuals with disabilities.

DVR staff will continue to provide education and awareness activities for the business community, lawmakers, service providers, educators, family members, and the general public to increase Disability Awareness. *Attachment 6.3*

Additional discussion relative to community rehabilitation programs is found in *Attachment 4.8(b)(3) - Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-profit Rehabilitation Service Providers.*