

2008

New York State

Chapter 515 Annual Report on Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities

Implementation Plan
Chapter 515, The Laws of 1992

New York State:

- *Education Department, Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID)*
- *Office of Children and Family Services, Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH)*
- *Office of Mental Health (OMH)*
- *Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD)*



The University of the State of New York • The STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT •
Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities • Albany,
NY 12234



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES
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October 2008


Dear Colleague:

New York State, through the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC), took a major step forward this year toward creating a comprehensive strategy for employment of individuals with disabilities. Recognizing the extensive challenges to employment faced by New Yorkers with disabilities, the Council created an Employment Committee charged with developing strategic recommendations to close the employment gap through executive, legislative and budgetary action.

This promising development builds on the efforts that began more than a decade ago with Chapter 515 of the Laws of 1992. Chapter 515 requires State agencies to coordinate their efforts on employment for people with disabilities. Enclosed is the annual report on our collective progress. Working in partnership with individuals with disabilities, their families, advocates, employers, service providers and local education agencies, we have assisted over 24,000 people with disabilities to work in integrated employment during the State Fiscal Year 2007/08. While we are pleased with these accomplishments, we know that we are not where we need to be. If we truly believe that individuals with disabilities can work when the proper supports and services are available, then our policies, and more importantly our actions, must continue to transform our services to reflect this belief, resulting in better outcomes.

As the work of the MISCC Employment Committee progresses, the State Education Department remains committed to closing the employment gap for persons with disabilities. Our continued collaboration with the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, the Office of Mental Health and the Office of Children and Family Services – Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped will ensure that New Yorkers with disabilities can have equal opportunities for self-determination, economic self-sufficiency and community participation.

Sincerely,


Rebecca H. Cort

Enclosure

c: The Honorable the Members of the Board of Regents
Commissioner Gladys Carrión
Commissioner Michael F. Hogan
Commissioner Diana Jones Ritter

**CHAPTER 515
ANNUAL REPORT ON INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT
FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES
SFY 2007/08**

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Chapter 515 2008 Annual Report on Interagency Efforts on Integrated Employment

Overview

The purpose of Chapter 515 of the Laws of 1992 is to “stimulate the continued growth of integrated employment programs for persons with severe disabilities” (now known as individuals with significant disabilities). Through this legislation, persons with significant disabilities will be able to succeed in employment through a coordinated flexible service delivery system. Coordination of this service delivery system is set forth within the Memorandum of Interagency Understanding Regarding Supported Employment (October 1999). Based on this Memorandum of Understanding, the following New York State agencies are collaborating to increase the entire range of employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities:

- Office of Children and Family Services, Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (**CBVH**);
- Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (**OMRDD**);
- Office of Mental Health (**OMH**); and the
- State Education Department, Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (**VESID**).

These agencies have also established the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team and have prepared this annual update of the employment outcomes achieved by their mutual consumers.

The Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team

The Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team consists of employment program managers from OMRDD, OMH, CBVH and VESID. The Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team, which was established in 2006, continues to meet monthly to discuss program, data and funding issues, facilitate cross-systems implementation and identify opportunities for program improvements. During the past year, the Team worked on the following areas.

- Statewide Reporting System. The Chapter 515 Implementation Team made changes to the New York Interagency Supported Employment Reporting (NYISER) system to enable community vocational rehabilitation providers to electronically complete VESID’s VES-416 Supported Employment Consumer Monthly Progress Report. We eliminated the required narrative questions. This also eliminated duplicative reporting elements for the different State agencies. The Team will continue to improve the NYISER system and determine how we can gather data that can assess program effectiveness and inform program quality improvement efforts.

- Interagency Communication on Program Changes. VESID and OMH Central Office Management Teams met with OMH Regional Office Directors in Suffolk County to discuss OMH PROS implementation and its impact on aligning employment efforts, particularly related to supported employment.
- OMRDD Enhanced Supported Employment Initiative. OMRDD developed a pilot project which is designed to demonstrate innovative employment strategies for individuals who want to work but who have been unable to become successfully employed for a variety of reasons. OMRDD and VESID collaborated in developing those sections of the RFP which will require close coordination between the two State agencies over the pilot's five year period. OMRDD will invite VESID to participate in the periodic review of the project's program evaluation which will assist both State partners in determining how each agency can improve employment services. VESID and OMRDD will use what they learn from this initiative to enable individuals with the most significant disabilities to become successfully employed consistent with their strengths, abilities and interests.
- APSE Discussions. The Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team continues to include representatives from the Empire State Association of Persons in Supported Employment (APSE) in our discussions for improving the quality and effectiveness of supported employment services by inviting them quarterly to our standing monthly meeting. As a result, we are in the process of developing a process through survey, public meetings, research and data review to assess the needs of persons with significant disabilities for supported employment services.
- State Partners Group. Based on the success of the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team, VESID convened a State Partners Group which invited other State agencies including the Department of Labor, the Workers' Compensation Board, the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, and the Commission on Quality Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities. This Group is looking at how we can better align our resources and what common strategies can we execute that would dramatically improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The Group has determined that it must focus on gaining a strong understanding of current labor market conditions within New York State and direct training and job placement efforts strategically toward those specific employment opportunities.

This year's annual update provides information on what was accomplished over the past State fiscal year (SFY 2007/08) and what is still needed to increase integrated and supported employment outcomes for people with disabilities. VESID, CBVH, OMRDD and OMH all play a critical, yet different, role to assure that people with the most significant disabilities can achieve integrated employment.

To appreciate the differences, it is important to understand the characteristics of the individuals served by each of these four State agencies and the current outcomes that are tracked by each State agency.

Current Description of All Individuals Served and Outcomes in SFY 2007/08 (4/1/07-3/31/08) for VESID, CBVH, OMRDD and OMH

The Chapter 515 Legislation requires that VESID report annually on how work opportunities for individuals with disabilities are coordinated among VESID, CBVH, OMRDD and OMH. The services provided by each of the four State agencies vary based on the mission and priorities of the four State agencies to prepare and support individuals with disabilities in integrated employment.

VESID and CBVH are the designated State agencies for providing vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to individuals with disabilities in New York State. CBVH provides services to individuals who are legally blind and VESID serves all other individuals with disabilities. To qualify for vocational rehabilitation services from CBVH or VESID, the individual with a disability must meet eligibility criteria. The individual must require VR services to achieve an employment outcome and intend to work after receiving services. Once eligible, an individualized plan for employment (IPE) is developed to achieve the employment goal. VESID and CBVH both provide a full range of vocational and technical services in order to help consumers achieve their vocational objectives and goals.

VESID and CBVH typically purchase a broad array of employment training and related services from a network of community rehabilitation programs, contractual vendors and other workforce resources. Services can, and often do, span over several years. VR services are completed when the person either becomes employed (for at least 90 days) or when it is determined that an employment goal cannot be achieved.

For supported employment services, VESID and CBVH provide the “intensive” services necessary to develop a job and train the person on the job until they can meet the demands of the position. Once the person completes this intensive phase of supported employment and is considered to be stabilized on their job, OMRDD and OMH provide follow-along or “extended services”, providing ongoing support to ensure the individual continues employment. For those individuals who do not qualify for OMRDD or OMH services, VESID provides the extended services using State funds.

VESID serves individuals with a variety of vocational impairments, including individuals with significant disabilities. Table 1 provides service information and Table 2 provides outcome information for all VESID consumers served.

Table 1
Current Description of Services Provided by VESID - SFY 2007/08

Service Category	Consumers
Assessment / Diagnostic / Medical	27,555
Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling and Guidance	83,435
College or University Training	7,380
All Other Training	10,218
Placement Services (Combined)	17,039
Transportation	15,905
Maintenance	4,274
Rehabilitation Technology	774
Interpreter/Personal Assistance Services	586
Technical Assistance / Other	978

Table 2
Current Description of Individuals Served and Outcomes by VESID

Description	Number
Total Served (Applicants, Current Services and Closed)	96,181
Total With Significant Disability	88,309
Total with Employment Plans – In Progress (as of March 31, 2008)	36,045
Total Ready For Employment	3,394
Total with Employment Plans – Closed (as of March 31, 2008 – Employed and Not Employed)	22,323
Employed In Integrated Settings Without Supports	9,492
Employed in Integrated Settings With Supports	2,973
Employed Homemaker/Other	545
Total Employed (Closed as Rehabilitated)	13,010
Average Weekly Earnings at Closure	\$335.56
Average Weekly Hours Worked at Closure	31.3

CBVH serves individuals with a primary impairment of legal blindness. Table 3 provides service information and Table 4 provides outcome information for all CBVH consumers.

Table 3
Current Description of Services Provided by CBVH - SFY 2007/08

Service Category	Consumers
Assessment / Diagnostic / Medical	3,256
Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling & Guidance	3,337
College or University Training	330
All Other Training Services	2,531
Placement Services (Combined)	296
Transportation	788
Maintenance	282
Rehabilitation Technology	428
Interpreter/Personal Assistance Services	107
Technical Assistance / Other	494

Table 4
Current Description of Individuals Served and Outcomes by CBVH

CBVH SFY 2007/08	
Description	Number
Total Served (Applicants, Current Services and Closed)	4,186
Total With Significant Disability	4,042
Total with Employment Plans – In Progress (as of March 31, 2007)	1,636
Total Ready for Employment	120
Total with Employment Plans – Closed (as of March 31, 2007 – Employed and Not Employed)	980
Employed In Integrated Settings Without Supports	315
Employed in Integrated Settings With Supports	20
Employed Homemaker/Other	303
Total Employed (Closed as Rehabilitated)	638
Average Weekly Earnings at Closure	\$505.28
Average Weekly Hours Worked at Closure	31.04

The Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), through its Developmental Disabilities Services Offices (DDSO) and provider partner agencies, provides an array of services which are designed to assist individuals with developmental disabilities to lead independent, inclusive and productive lives. Supported employment services are provided by 149 voluntary partner agencies which are located throughout NYS communities. People want to work and they can receive the supports and services that they need as close to home as possible. OMRDD supports the employment aspirations of individuals with development disabilities through a variety of program strategies and funding sources.

- Supported Employment. OMRDD assisted 9,000 New Yorkers with developmental disabilities with their employment service needs in community jobs during State Fiscal Year 2007/08. The support services are funded through the Home and Community Based Services Waiver and State dollars. For those individuals who wish to work and have special challenges or support needs, OMRDD can allocate additional resources through the use of the Supported Employment Contingency Fund. Contingency funds are made available on an annual basis and provider agencies must apply for them each year.
- Blended Services. OMRDD continues to encourage individuals with developmental disabilities to work collaboratively with voluntary provider agencies to create innovative person-centered proposals which support people in employment and participate in their communities. Frequently, these proposals include a blend of services (supported employment, day habilitation and pre-vocational services) which promote employment and community membership in unique ways.
- Self-Determination/ Consolidated Supports and Services (CSS). This self-directed WAIVER service offered by OMRDD continues to capture the imagination of self-advocates in New York State who use CSS as a support strategy to fulfill their dreams of employment. CSS is the method by which a person plans the services and supports needed to achieve a personal valued outcome, in this case, employment. CSS can support a person to explore or learn the specific skills needed for a particular job or business and can also fund job coaching supports. Approximately 65 people use CSS for employment.
- The Commissioner's Internship Program. The Commissioner's Employment Training Program Internship Program was designed and implemented to offer a customized employment option for individuals with developmental disabilities. Through this program, OMRDD offers paid job placements for motivated individuals who want to acquire and maintain long-term employment. This paid work experience enables the individual to gain the skills and the confidence required for successful employment. Through the internship program, extensive job development, job customizing, job carving, and intensive on-the-job supports are funded so that the intern can obtain the skill level needed to transition into long-term competitive employment. The paid internship lasts for 18 months, at

which time it is expected that the employer will hire the intern into their organization and begin to pay the individual's wages. During this year, more than 100 interns and 250 school-to-work trainees were served through the program.

Table 5
Current Description of All Individuals Served and Outcomes
as of June 2008 for OMRDD

OMRDD	
As of June 2008	
Total Number Served In Work Programs	21,684
Primary Developmental Disability	
Mental Retardation	16,689
Autism	353
Cerebral Palsy	460
Epilepsy/Seizure Disorder	194
Learning Disability	583
Other Neurological Impairment	404
Undetermined Developmental Disability	223
Average Age	42
Total Number in Supported Employment	8,396
Total Number in Transitional Employment	176
Total Number in Sheltered/Pre-Vocational	13,986
TOTAL (duplicated)	22,558
TOTAL (non-duplicated)	21,684

The Office of Mental Health (OMH) is committed to assisting individuals with psychiatric disabilities to identify, attain and maintain their chosen recovery goals. Employment is often identified as one of the most desired goals by individuals diagnosed with serious mental health conditions. Employment is also recognized to play an essential role in an individual's recovery. Accordingly, OMH is committed to helping the individuals we serve maintain their chosen employment goals.

OMH supports a full range of employment services in order to help individuals achieve their employment-related goals at any stage of recovery:

- Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS). PROS is a comprehensive recovery-oriented program for individuals with severe and persistent mental health conditions. The goal of the program is to integrate treatment, rehabilitation and support in a manner that facilitates an individual's recovery. The objective of employment-related services in PROS is to help individuals

obtain and retain integrated, competitive jobs. The PROS program model is flexible and allows providers to develop an array of services to assist individuals to obtain and retain the employment goals of their choice.

- Ongoing Integrated Supported Employment (OISE). OISE provides services related to ongoing job maintenance including job coaching, employer consultation and other relevant supports needed to assist an individual in maintaining a job placement. These services are intended to complement the intensive training phase of supported employment by VESID. In State fiscal year 2007, OMH supported over 3,300 individuals to maintain employment through OISE. Individuals received an average of 38 hours of ongoing supports and services to maintain employment (see Table 6).

Table 6
Description of Individuals Served in Ongoing Integrated Supported Employment between 4/1/2007 – 3/31/2008

Total Individuals Served in OISE Programs in SFY 2007	Total Number of Employment Service Hours Rendered	Average Number Service Hours Rendered Per Individual	Average Number of Hours Worked Per Week
3,328	128,580	38.64	23.44

- Work Programs. Work programs provide vocational assessment, training and transitional or long-term paid employment in institutional or community settings.
- Affirmative Business. Affirmative businesses provide vocational assessment, training, transitional or long-term paid employment and supportive services in an environment that is less restrictive and more integrated than sheltered workshops. These businesses may include mobile contract services, small retail or wholesale outlets and manufacturing or service-oriented enterprises.
- Assisted Competitive Employment (ACE). The purpose of Assisted Competitive Employment is to help individuals to set an employment goal and to find and maintain satisfying jobs in the competitive employment marketplace, at or above the minimum wage. ACE provides individuals with job-related skills training as well as long-term supervision and support services, both on and off the job site.
- Enclave in Industry. An enclave is a small group of approximately five to eight individuals with significant disabilities who work in an industrial or economic enterprise. An enclave provides vocational assessment, training and transitional or long-term paid work in an integrated employment environment. A job coach or supervisor, assigned to the worksite by the rehabilitation service agency, provides individuals with training, supervision and ongoing support.

- Transitional Employment Placement (TEP). The purpose of TEP is to strengthen an individual's skill level and work history with the goal of achieving assisted or unassisted competitive employment at or above the standard minimum wage. These placements provide time-limited employment and on-the-job training in integrated employment settings.
- Sheltered Workshops. Sheltered workshops provide vocational assessment, training and paid work in a protected, non-integrated work environment. Services are provided according to wage and hour requirements specified by the Fair Labor Standards Act administered by the Department of Labor.

In spite of significant budget cuts over the last year, OMH has shown a commitment to the importance of employment by maintaining or increasing funding to nearly every one of its employment programs. OMH has targeted funding specifically to employment-related services in PROS programs in an effort to insure that services are provided in a more complete and effective manner.

OMH especially advocates for the delivery of services that are consistent with the principles of the evidence-based practice of supported employment. These principles include:

- The belief that competitive employment is an attainable goal for the individuals served;
- A rapid job search and placement approach to help individuals obtain jobs directly rather than providing lengthy assessment, training and counseling;
- Individualized job placement based on the individual's experiences, preferences and strengths;
- Support to maintain employment for as long as needed; and
- Rehabilitation and clinical services that work together to support the individual's employment goal, assuring close collaboration and integration of services.

For people diagnosed with serious mental health conditions, employment-related support focuses on overcoming barriers caused by the symptoms and functional deficits related to the condition. Service providers are encouraged to coordinate employment services with many other elements of a person's life, including family and friends, clinicians, case managers, housing providers and other service agencies. Research has shown that coordination with important people and providers in an individual's life leads to greater likelihood that the person will obtain and retain a job.

Helping people to retain employment is also an important goal and OMH is committed to providing post-employment support for as long as necessary. Post-placement support activities include counseling regarding benefits, sharing stress management strategies, assessing job satisfaction, and developing the skills needed to manage symptoms in the workplace and to interact successfully with co-workers.

OMH data includes individuals served in supported employment only, and can be found in the following tables.

Overall Participation in Supported Employment

VESID, CBVH, OMRDD and OMH track participation of individuals in their respective supported employment programs. A total of 24,519 individuals were working as a result of intensive services provided by VESID and CBVH and in extended services by OMH and OMRDD.

Table 7
Total Number of Individuals Served in Supported Employment
between 4/1/2007 and 3/31/2008

Agency	Individuals Served
VESID/CBVH	12,028
OMRDD	9,076
OMH	3,415
TOTAL	24,519*

* Number of distinct consumers. Some served by more than one of the agencies listed.

VESID and CBVH are the two State agencies that provide intensive services, which are the initial job development and training phase of supported employment. VESID and CBVH served 9,084 individuals in intensive services. Table 8 captures data on the number of individuals who received extended services only and the number of individuals who moved from intensive services to extended follow-along.

Extended services are provided both on and off the job site, as frequently as necessary, to assess and maintain employment stability. At least two monthly face-to-face meetings with the consumer must occur on the job site unless on-site interventions are waived by VESID/CBVH. (Note: If on-site interventions are waived, two face-to-face meetings with the individual each month are still required). In addition, at least one contact with the employer must take place each month. (Note: The employer contact does not have to be face-to-face). The monthly contact with the employer is required unless the individual does not want the employer contacted. If the individual has not disclosed their disability or involvement in a Supported Employment program to the employer, then contact with the employer should not occur.

Table 8
Number of Individuals Served in
Extended Services between 4/1/2007 and 3/31/2008

Agency	Extended Only	From Intensive to Extended	Total Extended
VESID/CBVH	2,944	877	3,821
OMRDD	6,769	833	7,602
OMH	2,475	877	3,308
Served by more than 1 Agency	155	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
TOTAL	12,343 (non-duplicated)	2,587	14,731

Table 9
Numbers of Individuals Working between 4/1/07 and 3/31/08 in Intensive or
Extended Services (VESID/CBVH), or in Extended Services Only (OMRDD/OMH)

Agency	Number Employed*	Average Hourly Wage	Average Weekly Earnings	Average Weekly Hours Worked
VESID	7,793	\$7.94	\$192.55	24.25
CBVH	112	\$7.63	\$165.11	21.64
OMRDD	7,520	\$7.41	\$159.61	21.54
OMH	3,234	\$8.46	\$198.30	23.44

*Individuals were working while being served by the agency listed. There are duplicate counts across agencies, but distinct consumer counts within agencies.

Table 10
Individuals Who Completed Intensive Services in SFY 2007/08 and on 03/31/2008
Had Been Successfully Employed For at Least 90 Days

Agency	Number Employed	Average Hourly Wage	Average Weekly Earnings	Average Weekly Hours Worked
VESID	1,917	\$7.85	\$173.49	22.1
CBVH	20	\$8.08	\$157.56	19.5

In Table 11, the data support the fact that supported employment enables individuals with significant disabilities to participate in stable long-term employment.

Table 11
Number of Individuals Who Worked for the Following Numbers of Consecutive
Days between 4/1/2007 to 3/31/2008

Days on the Job	1 – 30	31 – 60	61 – 90	91 – 180	> 180
Number of Individuals	598	518	496	1,966	13,227

Prior Program Before Entering Supported Employment

The New York Interagency Supported Employment Reporting System (NYISER) tracks individuals' prior program or employment immediately before entering supported employment. Table 12 describes the employment status of persons transitioned from other programs during SFY 2007/08.

Table 12
Prior Program or Employment Type for Individuals who were in Intensive Services Sometime between 4/1/2007 and 3/31/2008

Prior Program or Employment	Number of Individuals
Competitive Employment	1,605
Supported Employment	816
Continuing Treatment	305
Special Education	1,621
Day Training Program	181
Day Treatment Center	191
Sheltered Employment	496
None	2,453
Other	1,294*
Day Habilitation	126
Prevocational Services	22

*Note: We are currently looking at ways to improve our data collection and further delineate the "Other" category.

Reasons Persons Left Supported Employment

Table 13 describes the reasons individuals ceased to participate in the supported employment program in either intensive or extended (follow-along) services.

Table 13
Program Termination Reason for Individuals Who Left Supported Employment
between 4/1/2007 and 3/31/2008

Program Termination Reason	Number of Individuals
Achieved Employment Goal (Does Not Want Support Services)	0
Behavioral Management Exceeds Program	448
Competitive Employment or Promotion	208
Day Training	21
Day Treatment	19
Deceased	41
Dissatisfaction	229
Family – Non-financial	82
Financial Disincentive	48
Incarceration	34
Medical Problems	378
Moved	321
No Longer Interested in Pursuing Employment	0
Not Attending	3
Other	2,449*
Other Program	328
Sheltered Employment	113
Support Not Available	29

*Note: We are currently looking at ways to improve our data collection and further delineate the reasons for selecting the “Other” category.

Next Steps: Enhancing Collaboration and Increasing Integrated Employment Opportunities

VESID

State-level coordination is essential for assuring a statewide focus on improving the quality of employment services and increasing integrated employment outcomes. This approach has enhanced collaboration at the local and regional levels.

- Supported Employment Training Institute (SETI). VESID issued a request for proposals (RFP) in 2004 for the provision of a Statewide Supported Employment Training Needs Assessment. The contract was awarded to the SUNY-Buffalo Research Foundation. The results of this needs assessment were received in July 2006 and were utilized as the basis for a statewide SETI to provide the actual training to providers and VESID staff. This is a five-year training initiative to provide instruction to community rehabilitation providers on a variety of supported employment related topics. During the past year, SETI provided over 47 workshops to community rehabilitation providers. Additionally, SETI will produce the course catalog and complete the development of the SETI website, which will be a knowledge resource for VR counselors, job developers and job coaches in community rehabilitation programs.
- Supported Employment Providers Guidelines. VESID revised and re-issued these guidelines in May 2008 in anticipation of scheduled quality assurance and monitoring reviews to be conducted over the next year.
- Supported Employment Contract Redesign For FFY 2010. In anticipation of new Supported Employment contracts beginning in FFY 2010, VESID is developing the new Supported Employment contracts that will include performance based funding strategies, updated standards for supported employment services and protocols to evaluate those standards.
- NYISER. State partners will continue updating NYISER protocols to more comprehensively capture information and reduce any unnecessary data reporting requirements from supported employment providers. The focus is to strengthen the overall quality of data for fiscal accountability and program quality improvement.
- NYS Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC). VESID has a strong interagency partnership presence in New York State and is an active participant in the NYS Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC) and is chairing the Employment Committee of that Council. The MISCC Employment Committee, which included Chapter 515 State agencies that met along with OASAS, State DOL, State Workers Compensation, and several private vocational rehabilitation agencies, identified specific areas for interagency collaboration. Through its leadership on the MISCC Employment Committee,

VESID and the entire membership of the Employment Committee, which consists of representatives from consumer, advocacy and statewide organizations, community rehabilitation programs, independent living centers, public schools and colleges and State agencies, adopted the following vision statement in May 2008:

All people can work. New York State, in partnership with the whole community, will exercise leadership to advance prospects for employment and economic self-sufficiency of all individuals with disabilities. Resources will be directed or redirected to realize this vision of integrated competitive employment. Individuals with disabilities will have the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from the economic vitality of the workforce. Employers will view individuals with disabilities as valued employees in their recruitment and hiring efforts.

- Unified Contract Services (UCS) Redesign. VESID provides a wide array of vocational rehabilitation services through community rehabilitation programs. This initiative reviewed VESID's vocational rehabilitation process and functions, made adjustments to meet emerging needs, responded to changes in the larger federally funded vocational rehabilitation services system, and reassessed the utilization of resources. Purchased services under the new UCS contract include: services to assist with entry into the VESID program; assessment services; assistive technology/rehabilitation services; work readiness services; job placement services; driver rehabilitation services; and related adjunct services such as benefits counseling, non job-related coaching support, mobility training, and transportation. The new contracts will be effective early 2009.
- 2008 Statewide Business and Industry Initiatives. VESID developed a statewide tri-fold brochure to promote quality vocational rehabilitation and independent living services to all eligible persons as quickly as those services are required to enable individuals to work and live independent, self directed lives. The tri-fold brochure highlighted data for return on investment and highlighted four success stories of consumers and their employment outcomes. VESID also updated its marketing web page to employers to feature those qualified workers who were assisted in achieving their employment goals in a variety of occupations. Their stories demonstrate the real life successes behind the statistics in this report and the valuable contributions they make to the workforce.
- 2008 NDEAM (National Disability Employment Awareness Month). NDEAM continues to be an annual statewide event. The theme this year is "America's People...America's Talent...America's Strength". In collaboration with many of our partners, VESID will be holding multiple events statewide. Some of these events will also include "Disability Mentoring Day" celebrations. VESID collaborates with our partners statewide to recognize employers *in the community*. Businesses

and workers with disabilities are recognized at the local level and with State-level awards that are selected in conjunction with the Department of Labor, CBVH, the Commission on Quality Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (CQCAPD), Department of Economic Development (DED) and Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DED)

CBVH

- Employment Focus. CBVH is continuing its emphasis on achieving quality employment outcomes, implementing recommendations from a CBVH management symposium which set the directions for the agency. Counselor meetings reinforce CBVH's employment priorities and allow counselors the opportunity to gain additional skills and knowledge, and to share successful strategies. For each of the past two years, CBVH has increased its competitive employment outcomes.
- Contracting for Services. CBVH will be implementing a new 5-year Comprehensive Services Contract, strengthening job-readiness (soft skill) and vocational skill training. CBVH has established expectations that these services incorporate input from employers and opportunities for participants to interact with employers. CBVH has also issued a Request for Qualifications to broaden the pool of providers willing to provide placement services to CBVH.
- Self-Employment. CBVH continues to support self-employment opportunities for consumers. During the past few years, after implementing a revised Self-Employment policy, along with an emphasis on self-employment through staff training initiatives, CBVH continues to actively work with consumers who are interested in pursuing self-employment. CBVH Home Office staff assists in the process by reviewing and providing comments and feedback on business plans. In 2007, 17 individuals achieved self-employment.

In New York City, CBVH continues to participate in the Abilities Fund grant program funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The grant links State vocational rehabilitation programs with micro-enterprise organizations. In New York City, the Abilities Fund Grantee - the Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) works with individual CBVH consumers to explore the feasibility of their business idea, if appropriate, develop a business proposal and if approved by CBVH, assist the individual in implementing the business plan.

- Work Experiences for Youth. CBVH recognizes that employment is a valuable teaching tool for the teenager and young adult, fostering responsibility and self-discipline, expanding social horizons and providing income. Most youth work before they graduate from high school. Therefore, CBVH has the expectation that all youth participate in some type of work experience during their teenage years. During the summer, many teenage and young adult consumers are

involved in work experiences. Other youth participate in prevocational programs, where they explore career options and acquire work-related skills; or pre-college programs, where they work on self-advocacy skills, research techniques and study skills. CBVH's Children's Program also prepares youth for employment, encouraging parents and schools to involve blind youth in chores at home and in volunteer activities. Social skills and self-confidence are further developed through participation in summer camps (both mainstreamed opportunities and experiences developed for individuals with disabilities). During the summer of 2007, 274 youths participated in summer employment and 308 youths participated in recreation programs.

- Business Enterprise Program (BEP). CBVH has established regional BEP training opportunities, which have increased the number of applicants to the program and CBVH's ability to fill vacancies. CBVH continues to expand BEP facilities to increase employment opportunities. CBVH established a new facility in the Federal court house in Central Islip, and has reclaimed a former BEP facility at the Cohalan Court House. BEP staffing was increased to allow CBVH to provide better managerial and job coaching support to facility managers. CBVH is actively working with the New York State Lottery to identify managers having trouble running the lottery portion of their business so that they can receive assistance to restore that business opportunity. The State Committee of Blind Vendors continues to work with CBVH to promote the employment of individuals with disabilities as employees in facilities run by legally blind managers.
- Supported Employment. Under the current contract, a total of 41 providers have contracted to serve a total of 184 consumers, with a goal to place, train and stabilize 115 of those consumers. CBVH has worked with VESID to utilize unused capacity at agencies with special expertise related to those CBVH consumers with disabilities in addition to blindness. CBVH will be working with VESID in planning the redesign of the SE contracts to improve service delivery.
- Vision Institute. With the Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program in Region II, CBVH held its annual "Vision Institute" designed to enhance participants' knowledge and skills related to working with people who are visually impaired. Over 130 participants, including CBVH staff and staff from community rehabilitation programs who work with individuals who are blind, learned about: working with people with multiple disabilities; issues related to aging and employment; ethics and disclosure; call center employment; innovations in outreach; providing customer driven services; the Business Enterprise Program; and Disability Mentoring Day.
- Case Management System. A new case management system will be implemented in October 2008. CBVH anticipates that the system will support more effective employment strategies by providing an employer database and a

variety of tools to be used to develop career goals, and provide better data by which to measure CBVH progress in achieving outcomes.

- Collaboration. CBVH continues to collaborate with community rehabilitation programs through regional employment provider groups, and with other state VR programs through participation with the Region I (New England) Employer Networking Group, and participation in employment initiatives of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation. Along with Baruch College's Computer Center for the Visually Impaired, CBVH and the Metropolitan Placement Consortium awarded their first "Access Builder" awards to employers in the Metropolitan NYC region.

CBVH collaborates with other State agencies and stakeholders on a number of statewide employment workgroups, including the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council's (MISCC) committees on Employment and Transportation, the Chapter 515 Implementation Group, and VESID's "State Partners" group. CBVH also participates in and supports NDEAM events across the State and participates in the steering committee selecting statewide winners.

- Marketing and Outreach. CBVH has begun to work with the Office of Children and Family Services Public Information Office to design a marketing and outreach campaign with the goals of:
 1. Increasing name recognition of CBVH among the general public.
 2. Increasing referrals and applications from legally blind consumers, especially those from underserved populations.
 3. Increasing employers' awareness of CBVH's ability to help them meet their staffing needs through qualified job applicants, assistance retaining employees who are losing their vision, and provision of technical assistance.
- Service Expansion. In order to be more responsive to underserved populations in areas of NYC, CBVH is establishing an additional district office in Harlem.

OMRDD - Putting People First

The Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) in accordance with its mission statement - *We assist people with developmental disabilities to live richer lives.* – has embarked on a "Putting People First" agenda for policy and service delivery.

In SFY 2008, OMRDD embarked upon a transformation agenda that strengthens their commitment to assisting individuals with developmental disabilities who want to work. Under the leadership of Commissioner Diana Jones Ritter, OMRDD participated in a series of regional forums which were conducted throughout NYS. During those forums, the impassioned voices of self-advocates and those who support them (parents, families, provider partners, teachers and others) were heard. These self-advocates

expressed the deep desire to be supported in their quest to become valued workers and to contribute to the economy of New York State.

As part of its “Putting People First” agenda, OMRDD is strategically planning to more effectively assist the growing numbers of individuals with developmental disabilities who want to contribute to the NYS workforce and move out of traditional day programs. The first step in growing the workforce is through the issuance of an ambitious Request for Proposals entitled the Enhanced Supported Employment Pilot Project in SFY 2008/09. This RFP has been designed to foster creativity and innovation in assisting people with developmental disabilities to achieve their employment dreams. OMRDD will be promoting the enhanced supported employment initiative which challenges workshops and other certified day programs (including day habilitation) to implement efforts for people to move into supported employment. Special emphasis will be extended to young people who are recent high school graduates who for whatever reason did not move directly into community employment from high school. Through this RFP, 700 new people will gain the dignity which comes with the financial security achieved through employment.

In order to support the employment aspirations of the people served by OMRDD, we are planning to develop a training agenda that supports the mission of “Employment First”.

OMH

- Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS) - PROS programs incorporate a person-centered approach to facilitating employment. Services are provided for the purpose of overcoming mental health barriers that prevent an individual from achieving his or her recovery goals.

Over the past year, OMH has been working with Erie County to support the conversion of existing programs to the PROS model. OMH is pleased to report that one program has already been issued a PROS license and that five more in Erie County will be converting by early next year. This will bring the total number of PROS programs to 20 by early 2009. In addition, programs in several other counties are actively working toward converting to the PROS model.

In preparation for the transition of programs to PROS, OMH offers training in a variety of areas including the implementation of employment-related services. The Workplace Center of Columbia University has proven to be an invaluable asset in providing this essential training. The Workplace Center also offers follow-up consultations on an as needed basis to agencies that have already received training. These consultations reinforce the importance of employment to recovery and provide one-to-one guidance to providers concerning implementation and planning issues. The Center is also available to moderate learning collaboratives to enable programs to learn from the successes and challenges of other programs.

OMH considers employment to be a fundamental element in the recovery process. PROS practitioners are encouraged to offer employment-related services to any participant who has a goal of working. In addition, OMH provides its own ongoing, individualized technical assistance and support to providers regarding these crucial employment-related services.

As PROS continues to be implemented throughout New York State, OMH will work in partnership with VESID and other State agencies to help individuals acquire jobs and to provide the necessary ongoing support to maintain those jobs.

- Assisted Competitive Employment (ACE) and Transitional Employment Placement (TEP) - OMH is looking at ways to encourage outcomes reporting from ACE and TEP programs in order to have a clearer, more complete depiction of the effect of the services.
- New York Interagency Supported Employment Report (NYISER) – NYISER is a data system created to capture detailed information about supported employment services offered by agencies contracted with VESID, CBVH, OMRDD and OMH. The Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team has been working to make the system more user friendly for all programs. The planned improvements include streamlining the data entry process and offering electronic versions of forms used by all agencies. It is our hope that these improvements will make data reports from NYISER more useful and meaningful for all four agencies.

OMH will continue to encourage programs to report employment-related information in NYISER toward the goals of improving statewide services and enhancing the lives of the people we serve.

Conclusion

While VESID is the designated State agency to coordinate integrated employment outcomes under Chapter 515, the work of the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team over the past two years has demonstrated the necessity of coordination and collaboration in order to develop a person-centered approach to employment services for individuals with disabilities in New York State. In January 2008, a rare opportunity was presented to all of the stakeholders involved in the provision of supports to assist people to achieve their employment goals. The Employment Committee of the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC) was established with a charge to close the employment gap for individuals with disabilities and devise recommendations that are designed to promote employment and to remove barriers to employment faced by people with disabilities who want to work. The employment rate of working-age people with disabilities (ages 21-64) is 33.5% as compared to 77.9% for people without disabilities, a gap of 44.4%.

As described earlier, the MISCC Employment Committee is composed of constituent groups and advocacy organizations who are united in developing strategies that are designed to achieve these goals. The Employment Committee is identifying collaborative opportunities emerging from a shared vision and common values. Key values driving the development of these collaborative opportunities include:

- All individuals with disabilities can work when the proper supports and services are available.
- Work is a normative and expected activity for working-age individuals with disabilities and should be the first consideration when providing supports and services for people with disabilities. Integrated work in the community is the preferred option over segregated day programs.
- New York State policy needs to shift to a “make work pay” paradigm that promotes integrated employment and supports greater financial independence, while at the same time creating safety nets to ensure ongoing access to essential benefits and services that make work possible and enable individuals to achieve real gains in economic self-sufficiency.

The Employment Committee is preparing specific recommendations, including the development of an extensive cross-systems strategic plan to close the employment gap for New Yorkers with disabilities. The work of the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team will only be strengthened by the recommendations made to the MISCC. This will hopefully result in individuals with disabilities making informed choices about employment options and career opportunities in the community and competitive workforce.

The State agencies will continue to enhance their collaboration and deliberate on revisions to The Supported Employment Memorandum of Understanding that can reflect a renewed commitment and higher expectations for achieving integrated employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

The Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team remains committed to continuous quality improvement in employment services. The Team will be conducting a survey of supported employment providers through NYISER to gain a better understanding of how to improve the program structure of supported employment. Priorities and goals will be measured and modified to respond to findings from the survey. These assessment activities will be used to align policies, training and practice to achieve the goals of the program resulting in operating a statewide comprehensive, effective and accountable program that provides vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services to individuals with disabilities, consistent with their strengths, abilities, capabilities, career interests and informed choice, so that they may prepare for and engage in employment.

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