

**State of Wyoming
Department of Workforce Services
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

State Plan



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Attachment 4.2(c)

**Summary of Input and Recommendations of the
State Rehabilitation Council;
Response of the Designated State Unit; and
Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations**

**Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
Comments from the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)**

The SRC's Review Committee was provided with the initial "working" draft of the Plan in order for them to provide their input early in the planning process. The Committee's comments and suggestions on this initial draft are then taken into consideration before a second draft is prepared for review by the DVR Administrator.

The Review Committee held two conference calls. The SRC's Chairperson also participated in these calls, although she is not a member of this Committee. The following comments were made:

Comment: DVR needs to have a strong partnership with other Federal and State Agencies to assist with the placement of DVR clients; building of positive relationships is needed. It was suggested that DVR add a goal or priority to the Plan to promote this partnership.

Response: This was added as a priority in the Plan.

Comment: There is a major trend of individuals starting up small business enterprises. Better coordination with government agencies is needed to secure grants and other small business resources. This should be enhanced in the Plan by adding a priority for assisting DVR clients to develop small businesses.

Response: DVR does work with clients who are interested in developing a small business, as noted in Attachment 4.9(c), Business Enterprise Program. This trend is also increasing with DVR's clients. This was added as a priority in the Plan.

Comment: Attachment 4.12(a), Needs Assessment, refers to the development of an Action Plan. Can this be shared with interested parties?

Response: Although there is no "formal" Action Plan document, the actions that DVR has taken and will be taking are included in the State Plan; for example in 4.12(d) with Innovation and Expansion, and services for individuals with acquired brain injury (ABI), severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI), and students in transition from school to work.

Comment: Attachment 4.11(b), Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, refers to a training session on "Successful Careers" that was held last year in five Wyoming cities. Can those be identified in the Plan?

Response: The five locations have been listed in the Plan.

Comment: It was suggested that a list of organizations and agencies that DVR uses as resources (such as the Community Rehabilitation Programs) be added to Plan so the reader would know where the agencies are located and how to contact them.

Response: The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) does not want this level of detail in the Plan. However, DVR believes this suggestion has merit. We can include this information in the Draft Plan that is distributed for review and comments, but remove it prior to submission of the final Plan to RSA for approval. This will be done when next year's Plan is being drafted.

The Review Committee reported the results of their review to the full Council at their quarterly meeting, which was held on February 6, 2006 in Cheyenne. No additional comments from the Council were made.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Public Hearing

A public hearing on the Draft Plan was held by compressed video on March 8, 2006 in Cheyenne, Casper, Cody, Rock Springs and Sheridan. Comments received at the hearing, written comments, and DVR's responses are on file at DVR's Central Office in Cheyenne.

“The State Plan, and any revision to the State plan, includes a summary of input provided by the Council, including recommendations from the annual report of the Council, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction described in Sec. 361.17(h)(4), and other reports prepared by the Council, and the designated State unit’s response to the input and recommendations, including explanations of reasons for rejecting any input or recommendations of the Council (Sec. 361.16(a)(2)(v)).”

**Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Reports**

Excerpts from SRC Quarterly Meeting Minutes

February 8, 2005:

Committee Report

Review Committee: Conference calls were held in January to discuss changes, revisions, etc. to the Unified State Plan.

Comments and responses from the Review Committee have already been included in the Draft Unified State Plan. The Public Hearing will be held on March 9, 2005 via compressed video.

Status of “Action Plan”: Jim McIntosh reported that DVR is developing a proposal which may affect the Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) population in Wyoming. A Request for Proposal (RFP) will be released statewide to organizations that may be able to affect positive change in ABI service delivery systems in Wyoming. Whether the project will go forth depends on the responses received through the RFP. Depending on reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act and how funding for school to work transition plays out at the federal level will determine what position DVR will take.

May 23, 2005:

Administrator’s Report: Acquired Brain Injury/Traumatic Brain Injury RFP No. 0301-M: Jim updated the Council on the Acquired Brain Injury Request for Proposal (RFP). This RFP will provide a more efficient network to identifying individuals statewide with brain injuries. The Department of Administration and Information (DA&I) sent out the RFP and will return all proposals to DVR when they are received for review.

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Report: Councilman Lee Biedleman reported that CAP is progressing on their Transition project and will be visiting schools in Big Piney, Jackson and southeast Wyoming. He noted that several schools statewide already have a good working relationship with DVR Counselors. They have found that schools need to work on scheduling and to be more persistent, while DVR and Independent Living needs to be more aggressive. As of July 1st the transition process will begin at age 16, instead of 14.

Transition Council Report: Councilman Phil Newberry reported that they (Wyoming Department of Education) have new authorization on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Transition Council is involved a lot with monitoring so it's been placed on hold. They recently had their third council meeting. Their website is up and running. The Council is in the process of gathering post-school data for the last two years. The Federal Government has requested this data for special education and regular education for comparison.

August 15, 2005:

Administrator's Report

Federal: Reauthorization of the Rehab Act has passed the House in a bill that is less palatable than the Senate version. The two bills will now go to conference committee. A strong point in both bills is the reemphasis that IDEA and the Rehab Act must work closely together with Students in Transition from School to Work.

Acquired Brain Injury/Traumatic Brain Injury RFP (No. 0301-M): Merle Derdall, DVR Consultant, gave a brief overview of the Acquired Brain Injury Request for Proposal (RFP). The 2003 Wyoming Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs (WYARN) confirmed the findings of previous studies and DVR's operational experience that individuals with acquired brain injuries do not receive optimal services on a sustained basis. Therefore, Wyoming Acquired Brain Injury Network (WABIN) a proposed five year implementation project was conceived. Deadline for proposals is August 16.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee: Discussed topics to be included at the next SRC meeting, to include strategic planning; the client satisfaction survey and to what extent SRC members should take in visiting with clients unhappy with their services from DVR; and SRC recruitment.

Review Committee: Discussed several scenarios for tracking the Client Satisfaction Survey (CSS); sending a post card, color coding for region and having the counselor hand them to clients.

Transition Report: Councilman Phil Newberry reported that the next Transition meeting is scheduled for late September or early October. IDEA is currently putting together a set of guidelines. The Rules and Regulations on Transition are also being finalized.

Client Satisfaction Survey Report: There was extensive discussion on the CSS. Several suggestions were made as how they can be tracked: color coding, adding client number, etc. **A recommendation was made that the statement at the bottom of the form be changed from: "Would you like someone from DVR to contact you?" TO "Would you like someone from the State Rehabilitation Council contact you? If so, please give name and phone number."**

The possibility of adding the counselor number to the "revised date" will be looked into as a means of tracking surveys.

November 14, 2005:

Status of Needs Assessment:

Severe and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI): Jim McIntosh indicated that this is a group DVR continually works with. Staff is being helped to refocus on a more aggressive relationship with the mental health centers as to help more on a vocational perspective when they start working with mutual clients. Currently, DVR has a very good working relationship with most of the mental health centers in the state and its goal is to continue to try to have a positive impact.

Transition: This is still one of the top three areas that DVR wants to focus on. DVR's goal is to have an impact on all students with disabilities, both Special Ed and 504 students.

Acquired Brain Injury (ABI): Merle Derdall reported that the first ABI Request for Proposal (RFP) resulted in just one proposal being submitted. This proposal was submitted by the Wyoming Brain Injury Association (BIA). The BIA is currently an information and referral service. The proposal they submitted was a continuation/expansion of that information and referral service. Since DVR had a more global systems change model in mind for the new proposed project, it was rejected. Since that time, the RFP has been revised and scheduled for release on December 5, 2005. The proposed contract commencement date is October 1, 2006. The most important change in the RFP, which should make this one more successful, is that \$100,000/year or up to \$500,000 for five years has been authorized.

Revised Client Satisfaction Survey and Cover Letter: The new Client Satisfaction Survey is now being used and is being mailed to clients with a cover letter signed by the SRC Chairperson. Results from the surveys will be sent to the Chairperson for review and shared with council members.

November 15, 2005:

Committee Reports

Review Committee: Reviewed the timeline for the next State Plan and set dates for conference calls to discuss the State Plan, which will be brought before the SRC for review at the February 2006 meeting.

Transition Report: Donna Thompson, Secondary Transition Coordinator from the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE), reported that WDE has been working on the State Performance Plan, which is required by the federal regulations. There are two new indicators that really affect transition: **Monitoring Priority: Effective General Supervision Part B/Effective Transition, Indicator #13:** Percent of youth aged 16 and above with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that includes coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the student to meet the post-secondary goals. (20 U.S.C. 1416(A) (3) (B)). And **Monitoring Priority: Effective General Supervision Part B/Effective Transition, Indicator #14:** Percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of post-

secondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school. (20 U.S.C. 1416(a) (3) (B)). Donna also talked about monitoring priorities and key provisions on transition.

Excerpts from the SRC's 2005 Annual Report

July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2005

The SRC is authorized to review, analyze and advise the Wyoming DVR on the performance of the Vocational Rehabilitation program. In partnership with DVR, the SRC develops and reviews state goals and priorities, evaluates the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program, assists in the preparation of the Unified State Plan, and reviews consumer satisfaction.

Members are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor, and are based on personal qualifications and the needs of the Council. Members are a representation of persons with disabilities; disability advocacy organizations; current and former consumers of vocational rehabilitation services; medical professions; state educational agencies; and representatives of business, industry and labor.

The SRC meets four times per year on a quarterly basis. Meetings are held in various communities throughout Wyoming and are open to the public. Locations and times are published in the Casper Star Tribune newspaper, Wyoming's statewide publication.

The SRC is dedicated to ensuring persons with disabilities throughout the state of Wyoming receive needed services by conducting and reviewing a needs assessment survey; reviewing programs and policies being implemented; developing a consumer friendly client satisfaction survey; and by working in cooperation with such groups as the Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Wyoming Statewide Independent Living Council, Parent Training and Information Center, Client Assistance Program, and other agencies to develop a proactive approach for the betterment of persons with disabilities.

Message from the Chair:

It has been an honor to serve the Governor and the people of Wyoming, first as an SRC member and most recently, as the Chair. I am proud of the strong partnership the SRC has forged with partners across the disability community. It is through these partnerships and a close and focused interaction that we will prevail despite current and future challenges. The SRC is charged with important responsibilities that impact the lives of citizens with disabilities in Wyoming. I want to thank the members of the SRC for their hard work and dedication that helped strengthen the vocational rehabilitation program this past year. Our membership is comprised of caring people who desire to ensure that all citizens with disabilities in Wyoming have fair and equal access to rehabilitation services.

Executive Committee Report:

The Executive Committee has been working closely with the DVR Administrator and other members of the committee discussing new nominations for the SRC, policies, and solutions to improve the communication between DVR and the SRC.

The goal of this committee is to facilitate a positive partnership between DVR and the SRC. Both entities are crucial in the success of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The SRC's suggestions and advice are to provide a stronger and more effective DVR.

Communications Committee Report:

The Communications Committee has the responsibilities of coordinating and communicating with other councils and human resource entities; performing and coordinating public relations; and maintaining the Employer Recognition Program.

Staying informed of the activities of other organizations concerned with the disabled population provides powerful networking tools and helps to avoid duplication of efforts. In the interest of staying informed, efforts have been made to obtain meeting minutes from other entities that may not be represented on the State Rehabilitation Council.

Promoting the awareness and function of Vocational Rehabilitation creates connections between VR consumers and the employers who can benefit from hiring them. The Communications Committee makes employment information available to employers, consumers, and parents by participating in the annual Mega Conference. This is a joint effort of the SRC and DVR.

The importance of the employers' efforts to utilize people of differing abilities cannot be overlooked. This committee, by collaborating with the Business Leadership Network, recognizes employers around the state who support employment of people with disabilities. Without employers' willingness to recognize people's talents, VR efforts and a willing workforce would go untapped.

The Communications Committee takes great pride in helping the SRC be an active partner in recognizing and utilizing Wyoming's often untapped workforces.

Review Committee Report:

The Review Committee has the yearly responsibility to review DVR's State Plan. Other responsibilities are to make sure client satisfaction survey results are accounted for from DVR. This is a very important role of the SRC, and the Review Committee is reviewing client concerns regarding the DVR service delivery system.

This committee holds regular conference calls reviewing the State Plan and discusses any changes that may need immediate attention.

Attachment 4.9(c)

Cooperation and Coordination With Other Agencies and Other Entities

- (1) Cooperation with Agencies That Are Not in the Statewide Workforce Investment System and with Other Entities
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Cooperation and Coordination

DVR's Plans, Policies and Procedures for Coordination with Other Agencies and Programs

A. U. S. Department of Agriculture and State Use Contracting Programs

The Wyoming Rural Development Council is a collaborative public/private partnership that brings together six partner groups: local/regional government, state government, federal government, tribal government, non-profit organizations, and private sector individuals and organizations. One DVR Program Specialist participates in Rural Development Council activities.

The Wyoming Rural Development Council has four goals:

- Assist rural communities in visioning and strategic planning
- Serve as a resource for assisting communities in finding and acquiring grants for rural projects
- Serve and be recognized as a neutral forum for identification and resolution of multi-jurisdictional issues
- Promote, through education, the understanding of the needs, values, and contributions of rural communities

B. Coordination with Education Officials

The Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is continuing its commitment to transition services by maintaining its cooperative agreement with the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE).

The Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has continued support of local school districts by creating additional community transition teams and establishing local agreements so that the needs of the school district as well as the individual student are met. Training programs were conducted on the local and statewide levels. DVR plans to continue with training programs so that more local school districts will see the benefit of actively participating in transition. DVR has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Wyoming Department of Education with the following stated purpose:

The purpose of this MOU is to enhance the working relationship between the parties in order to provide more effective services to individuals with disabilities in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. This includes working more closely in evaluating, serving, and planning for individuals eligible for vocational rehabilitation and

developing a means for transfer of items of assistive technology to DVR for eligible individuals as they make the transition from the classroom to the workplace.

This MOU has provisions which include:

1. Joint training between staff of both agencies.
2. Referral procedures.
3. Technical Assistance to school districts.
4. Monitoring of transition students' progress.
5. Sharing of client statistical data.
6. Use, ownership, and payment for assistive technology devices and services.
7. Provision of vocationally-related services by DVR, to include situational assessment, career exploration, job shadowing, vocational guidance and counseling, and work experience for students determined eligible for DVR services.

In addition to the state level MOU, the development of agreements between local school districts and local DVR offices ensures that a transition team is established to facilitate the development and accomplishment of the objectives and long-term goals. These teams meet for Individual Education Program (IEP) development and scheduled planning sessions. The planning sessions, which include parents and consumers, help determine the schedule of transition from the school system to vocational rehabilitation. This process includes students with disabilities who are not receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Currently, a special effort in the area of transition from school-to-work is being devoted to improving IEPs for outcomes and quality as opposed to process. The Wyoming Transition Council, of which DVR is a member, has been established to achieve the initiative of the Wyoming Transition Outcomes Project.

The Wyoming Transition Council also includes:

Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities
Native American Employment and Training
Employment Service
Parent Information Center
Board of Cooperative Educational Services
Wyoming Association of Secondary School Principals
Division of Developmental Disabilities
Wyoming Institutions
Wyoming Department of Family Services
Private Industry
Post Secondary Education
Wyoming Department of Corrections
Wyoming New Options in Technology
Wyoming Department of Education's Vocational and Special Education

Wyoming Association of Special Education Administrators
Wyoming Community College Commission
Wyoming Association of Regional Service Providers

In FY99, this Council designed and implemented the Wyoming Transition Initiative Outcomes Project. This project is designed to have all school districts in compliance with IDEA, create quality outcome IEPs and Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) and enhance DVR/WDE working relationships at the local level.

A pilot project at three school districts involved reviewing IEPs for all students 14 years of age and older. The project was not designed to monitor, but to discover how things are being done and what needs to be considered for change, i.e., changing from process to outcome, and instituting training for WDE educators, school district educators, and DVR counselors and staff.

The Transition Project is an initial attempt to collect, show and discuss data findings (taken from review of student records, i.e. IEPs) and then with the assistance of the council, to formalize a plan of action that will best serve transitioning students, families and educators with transition issues. An initial pilot project was completed, entitled the Wyoming Transition Initiative. This entailed a review of all IEPs of students in three towns. One year later, the same records were looked at. Ultimately all 48 School District cases were reviewed, and school personnel were provided feedback. As a result of the success of this type of review and feedback, 14 other states have adopted this approach and it is being replicated in all Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools.

The council is working on an approach for formalizing a plan of action to improve the transition process. One example of major change and effort is to have district school personnel to first look at Post-School Goals (vision) rather than present level of performance, and to engage students as to their preference towards post school goals, i.e. work, training, etc.

The Council is working on discerning the best possible avenues for what should happen next. They will continue to review the role of assisting school districts to help them meet the requirements of IDEA as well as Wyoming's rules and regulations for serving young adults with disabilities.

The Wyoming Transition Council, Wyoming Department of Education and Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center will set up trainings for Special Education teachers and personnel for developing appropriate and improved transition and Special Education plans, particularly IEPs. The Council is in the very early stages of setting up a statewide transition conference/training to include DVR. This would likely be in the spring of 2007.

Local education agencies implement the strategies, skills and knowledge obtained from the training to achieve target goals.

DVR will provide for the development and completion of the IPE for each student with a disability determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services before the student leaves the school setting.

OBJECTIVE	METHODS
<p>Improve and expand transition services to include additional school districts.</p>	<p>Continue training and team building to include personnel from Education, DVR, Mental Health, and ABI professionals as appropriate.</p> <p>Continue coordination and cooperation at State and local levels to create new transition teams and maintain existing ones.</p> <p>Continue to work with the Access 2 Ability program in Laramie and Uinta Counties.</p> <p>Work cooperatively with the Wyoming Department of Education on expanding the transition program.</p> <p>Update cooperative agreements with the Wyoming Department of Education and local school districts as needed.</p> <p>Increase contacts and education of school personnel to enhance the transition program.</p> <p>Increase implementation of transitional services to students 16-21 years of age.</p> <p>Adapt administrative policy to reflect changes necessary to meet the needs of students moving from school to work.</p>

The Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation also has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Wyoming Institutions of Higher Education (IHE). The purpose of this cooperative agreement is to guide the planning and delivery of support services to individuals with disabilities who are mutual clients of DVR and students enrolled at a Wyoming IHE, so that there is a seamless delivery system for those services which overlap. These IHEs include the University of Wyoming and Wyoming's seven community colleges.

This MOU has provisions which include:

1. DVR and IHEs are not required to alter their policies, which are different from each other, for providing services or support.
2. IHEs are only required to provide services and accommodations to DVR clients to the same extent as they are provided to other students with disabilities.

3. DVR is not prohibited from contracting with individual IHEs to provide services or support for DVR clients, beyond those required to assure equal access to educational opportunities.
4. Information exchange and joint training.
5. Referral procedures.
6. IHEs will not require students who have a disability to apply for DVR funding before providing services or support. Nor will they deny or delay the provision of services or support while DVR is determining the student's eligibility for DVR services.
7. In situations where referral has been made to an IHE for services, the appropriate IHE staff may be involved in developing the Individualized Plan for Employment.
8. The DVR Counselor and IHE staff will respect the individual's right and responsibility to fully participate in all decisions regarding his or her vocational future.
9. Definition of reasonable accommodations and auxiliary aids.
10. Guidelines for the provision of auxiliary aids including that the funding source for auxiliary aids will be determined on an individual, case by case basis depending on the setting and the individual's status as a student or DVR client, and in the case of equipment, a determination of who will retain ownership.
11. Additional guidelines for the provision of interpreter services.
12. Guidelines for the provision of different types of real-time captioning services.

C. Collaboration With Other Agencies and Organizations to Assist in the Provision of Supported Employment and Extended Services

It is the mission of Wyoming DVR to advance opportunities for Wyoming citizens with disabilities to be employed and independent in the least restrictive and most integrated environments possible. To this end, DVR has established and continues to maintain strong working relationships with State agencies and other appropriate entities to assist in the provision of supported employment services throughout Wyoming.

In Wyoming, supported employment means persons with the most significant disabilities obtaining community integrated, part-time or full-time employment, at competitive wages with benefits equal to those commonly accepted throughout the work force.

The goal of Wyoming's supported employment program is to increase community integration, individual independence, and productivity for persons with the most significant disabilities. In support of this goal, the Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will:

- Continue cooperative efforts with school districts and other rehabilitation entities to enhance supported employment programs statewide;
- Continue to support the Wyoming Business Leadership Network (WBLN) with expansion to additional Wyoming communities that will enhance supported employment services; and

- Encourage dedicated funding for long-term support needed by supported employment clients. This will include networking with the Division of Behavioral Health, Regional Service Providers (RSPs) of Wyoming, Mental Health Centers, the Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities, State and local education programs, Social Security employment incentives including ticket to work programs, training programs under the Workforce Investment Act, and the employer community represented by the Wyoming Business Leadership Network.

OBJECTIVES	METHODS
<p>Improve and maintain supported employment services and programs statewide.</p>	<p>Continue statewide supported employment services over the plan period to the extent that Federal Section 622 funds are available.</p> <p>Maintain services to include all disability groups, with an emphasis on individuals with severe and persistent mental illness, and with acquired brain injury and transition age students, as outlined in the recommendations section of the 2003 Wyoming Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs.</p> <p>Continue support for the maintenance and expansion of the Wyoming Business Leadership Network.</p> <p>Improve utilization of existing long-term support mechanisms via focused counselor and assistant training.</p> <p>Continue to educate and train service providers to bring Assistive Technology (AT) services to more supported employment clients statewide.</p> <p>Continue serving people with severe and persistent mental illness through supported employment services provided by Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs).</p> <p>Increase counselor participation in IEP meetings.</p>

DVR will continue to pursue cooperative and collaborative efforts with the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) and the Wyoming Association for Persons in Supported Employment (WYAPSE). Both programs are administered by and located at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, Wyoming. State wide assistive technology services are available to supported employment clients.

Community Rehabilitation Programs

Section 101(a)(15) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, sets forth requirements for the conduct of a statewide needs assessment, which must include an assessment of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) within the State.

As defined in the Rehabilitation Act (Section 7 (25)), a “community rehabilitation program” means a program that provides vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities ... to enable the individual to maximize opportunities for employment, including career advancement. The term “community rehabilitation program” refers to any such community-based agency, regardless of the type(s) of disabilities customarily served, or the agency’s primary funding source.

DVR has conducted a number of statewide needs assessments since 1989 which have served to guide and direct the focus of the Agency’s use of CRPs. In 1996, DVR executed a contract with private consultants to conduct a Wyoming Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs (WYARNs) study that was completed in October, 1997. A follow-up WYARN update was completed by consultants in 2000. A focused 2003 WYARN began again in May 2003 and was completed in August 2004. The following relative data is taken from the WYARN 2003 Report:

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation makes extensive use of these programs, primarily to provide supported employment and related services. Information has been gathered from Rehabilitation staff, representatives of community rehabilitation programs, the State Rehabilitation Council and other key informants. This input, along with supporting statistical data, is used in this 2003 WYARN report to identify effective service models and opportunities for expansion, dissemination or replication of services shown to be most effective.

Utilization, Findings and Capacity of Community Rehabilitation Programs

The Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation makes extensive use of community rehabilitation programs, primarily to provide supported employment and related services. All Regions of the state continue to be served to some degree by community rehabilitation programs operating under the state’s developmental disabilities and behavioral health programs, or by independent organizations. Coverage is comprehensive for individuals with developmental disabilities, although a few agencies affiliated with the Developmental Disability (DD) system still do not provide extensive supported employment opportunities. These gaps have been, to a degree, filled through the use of independent non-profit or for-profit agencies, and through the employment of free-lance job coaches.

There are still geographic, programmatic and disability-related gaps in the capacity of community rehabilitation programs to provide the array of services the State Rehabilitation agency needs for other clients with the most significant disabilities:

- Although there is progress, there are substantial gaps in services to persons with acquired brain injuries;

- State of the art supported employment services for persons with severe and persistent mental illnesses are more widely available than at the time of the previous Needs Assessments, but are still not available to all communities; and
- The potential for community rehabilitation programs to play a more substantial role in preparing students with disabilities for the transition from school to employment in the community has not been fully explored.

Historically, the Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has made very effective use of community rehabilitation programs in serving the clients with the most significant disabilities. Over the past several years, significant progress has been made in encouraging mental health centers, among other providers, to become more involved in providing supported employment services.

Progress rarely happens in a straight line, however. In some instances, promising efforts at collaboration with service providers have lost ground for reasons that may or may not be under the control of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. In some cases, local staffs have succeeded in finding or developing alternative resources for supported employment services.

The demonstrated effectiveness of supported employment services in providing employment opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities argues for persistence in the face of adversity. With some mental health centers in particular, it is in the long-term interest of individuals with severe and persistent mental illness that collaborative supported employment programs are developed.

Policies for the use of Community Rehabilitation Programs

The Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's use of community rehabilitation programs continues to reflect a commitment to integrated, community-based employment.

The Division has issued a policy to the effect that CRP's must be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), unless the organization has been in existence for less than 12 months, or has been providing services to clients for less than that time.

The Division also maintains a policy that Mental Health Centers from which DVR purchases services must be certified by the Division of Behavioral Health.

Conclusion

There is clearly a need for action on the part of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to support expansion or enhancement of the capacity of community rehabilitation programs to serve individuals with acquired brain injuries or severe and persistent mental illness. Monitoring of the evolving role of community rehabilitation programs in serving youth in transition from school to work may also be productive.

D. Department of Education (WDE) Services for the Visually Impaired

Collaboration with WDE's Services for the Visually Impaired (SVI) and special education assists students and adults with disabilities in several ways. For example, the Montgomery Trust (a private trust specifically earmarked for the visually impaired) can provide assistive technology equipment to both visually impaired youth and adults. Also, last year DVR collaborated with SVI, Wyoming Independent Living, Centrum for Disability Services, and CreateAbility Concepts in providing services to clients.

E. Shoshone Tribal Business Council

DVR and the Eastern Shoshone Tribal Business Council have a written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning rehabilitation services for Native Americans. Special Federal grant funds for services to Native Americans living on or near the Wind River Indian Reservation were first awarded seven years ago. The five year grant ended and a new five year grant was funded through Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), providing seamless service to this Native American population.

DVR staff participate on the Red Feathered Eagle Vocational Rehabilitation (RFEVR) Advisory Council. RFEVR staff participate on the State Rehabilitation Council and in DVR staff training events.

F. Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) is part of Resource Development Services (RDS) for DVR. It is responsible for administration of vending machine placement and services in State buildings and other small businesses that may operate in State buildings. This necessitates close working relationships with vending service providers, building administrators, job coaches, CRPs, and other government agencies.

The main objective of BEP is to assist individuals with disabilities in planning and setting up small businesses. Other entities are often involved in this process, including the Small Business Administration, the Small Business Development Centers, the Wyoming Women's Business Center, the Wyoming Business Council, Social Security, private sector businesses, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, and Rocky Mountain Inventors and Entrepreneurs' Congress.

BEP is working with the Wyoming Small Business Development Center, the Wyoming Women's Business Center, and the Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault to create a non-profit organization to serve self-employed individuals. Training and other resources, including an incubator system and support network from various fields of expertise, will be featured.

G. Wyoming Relay/Deaf Services Program

The Wyoming Relay/Deaf Services program is also part of DVR's RDS. This program coordinates and cooperates with numerous Federal, State and local agencies and programs for the provision of services to individuals with communication impairments.

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Wyoming Legislature gave DVR administrative authority over Wyoming Telecommunication Relay Service (also known as Wyoming Relay). The legislation established a special fee as the method of funding. DVR, through a competitive bid process, awarded a contract to a telecommunication service provider and oversees that contract. DVR also works cooperatively with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the Wyoming Public Service Commission (PSC), Local Exchange Carriers, and Radio Common Carriers to ensure that Wyoming Relay provides a quality telecommunications relay service to relay conversations between people who use text telephones (TTYs) and people who use the standard telephone network. Wyoming Relay meets or exceeds all operational, technical, and functional federal and state standards.

The legislation establishing Wyoming Relay also created a committee on telecommunications services for the communications impaired. The Governor appoints the seven members of the committee. DVR collaborates with this consumer-based committee to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of current services, to determine the need for new services, to develop marketing and outreach plans, to establish the rate of the special fee, and to determine equipment needs for the telecommunications equipment distribution program.

Wyoming Relay works cooperatively with DVR staff, phone companies, independent living centers, educational outreach consultants, special education teachers, consumer groups, assistive technology service providers, public health agencies and senior citizen centers to provide information and training on obtaining and using specialized telecommunications equipment including TTYs, amplified phones, and telephone signaling devices for consumers with communication impairments.

The Wyoming Relay/Deaf Services program also provides training and information on how to use TTYs, relay service, assistive devices for persons with communication impairments, and the requirements of the ADA in providing services for persons with communication impairments including how to find and use interpreters. This training is provided to individuals; students; businesses; organizations; and city, county, state, and federal agencies. Wyoming Relay/Deaf Services has developed a specialized training program and works cooperatively with local and state law enforcement agencies, providing training to public safety dispatchers to ensure that 911 is accessible to callers using TTYs. Additionally, all peace officers and detention officers going through the law enforcement academy receive training to ensure that they are providing accessible services to individuals with communication impairments.

DVR works collaboratively with Wyoming Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (WYRID) to develop and modify a form which serves as a tool for assessing the skill level of interpreters. This form is distributed to all known interpreters in the state. The completed forms

are then used to develop a list of interpreters. This list is distributed to the general public, individuals, businesses, organizations and agencies.

Consultation by the Wyoming Relay/Deaf Services Consultant to facilitate the transition of students with hearing impairments is provided at the request of the student, parents, school personnel, Department of Education outreach consultants, or DVR counselors.

H. Division of Workers' Safety and Compensation (WC)

DVR continues to have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Division of Workers' Safety and Compensation (WC) which is located in Wyoming's Department of Employment, but is not a Workforce Investment Act (WIA) "partner." The purpose of the MOU is to clarify procedures and responsibilities when an injured worker applies for the vocational rehabilitation option. (Refer to Wyoming Statutes, 27-14-408.) Cross education between DVR and WC staff occurred at the Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 DVR in-service. Also, a handbook for clients explaining the WC and DVR processes was written and distributed to both agencies' staff. A communication system to resolve client issues has been established and will be maintained.

I. Cooperation in Training Activities

DVR routinely collaborates with other organizations to provide training opportunities for DVR staff, as well as for staff of other agencies. The following is a partial list of collaborating organizations:

- University of Wyoming
- Wyoming INstitute for Disabilities (WIND)
- Wyoming Department of Education
- Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Small Business Development Centers
- Wyoming Substance Abuse Treatment and Recovery (WYSTAR)
- Sheridan College
- Community Rehabilitation Programs, statewide
- Region VIII Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RCEP)
- Region VIII Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (CRP-RCEP)
- Centers for Independent Living
- Creative Training Accelerating Talent
- Protection and Advocacy, the Client Assistance Program
- Prairie Institute
- Eastern Wyoming College
- Casper College
- Western Wyoming Community College
- Wyoming Benefits, Planning, Assistance and Outreach
- Fred Pryor Seminars

- National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
- State of Wyoming, Department of Administration and Information
- Department of Workforce Services partners
- Social Security Pass Cadre
- Laramie County Community College
- Montana State University – Billings
- Utah State University

Currently, a special effort in the area of transition from School-to-Work is being developed. The Wyoming Transition Council has been established to achieve the goals of the Wyoming Transition Outcomes Project. The membership of the transition group is quite diverse, consisting of representatives from the following:

- Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Native American Employment and Training
- Employment Service
- Parent Information Center
- Board of Cooperative Educational Services
- Wyoming Association of Secondary School Principals
- Division of Developmental Disabilities
- Wyoming Institutions
- Department of Family Services
- Private Industry
- Post Secondary Education
- Wyoming Vocational Association
- Department of Corrections
- Wyoming New Options in Technology
- Wyoming Department of Education's Vocational & Special Education
- Wyoming Association of Special Education Administrators
- Wyoming Community College Commission
- Wyoming Association of Regional Service Providers
- Wyoming Independent Living Programs

Attachment 4.11(b)

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Policies, Procedures and Activities to Establish and Maintain a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Wyoming DVR's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) includes procedures and activities undertaken to insure an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals. This system has four goals:

- ♦ Identify the current professional training needs of staff and plan for skills and knowledge development of staff one to five years from now;
- ♦ Coordinate personnel development activities with the Wyoming Department of Education as specified by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);
- ♦ Coordinate a means to address training needs of current staff using institutions of higher education; and
- ♦ Coordinate activities to ensure staff are adequately trained and prepared to expand and improve services to clients.

The State Rehabilitation Council has had an opportunity to review and comment on the development of plans, policies, and procedures regarding: 1) the plan for recruitment, preparation, and retention of qualified personnel, 2) personnel standards, 3) staff development, and 4) personnel to address individual communication needs.

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

Wyoming DVR maintains a system for collecting and analyzing data on an annual basis, which includes information on personnel needs, a plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel, personnel standards, staff development, and personnel to address individual communication needs. Information on the number, location and disability types served; number of agency personnel and level of education; and training needed to improve skills and maintain certification levels is included in this section.

Qualified Personnel Needs

Total counselor number is 29. An additional counselor was hired at the beginning of 2005 to bring Wyoming DVR to this level of counselors. The following chart shows the number of counselors employed since 2000, the number of clients for each year, and the average number of clients per counselor.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Counselors	26	28	28	28	29	29
Number of Clients	3861	3968	4016	4155	4180	3954
Average Number of Clients per Counselor	149	138	143	148	144	136

The number and types of personnel that are employed by DVR in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services are shown below:

Counselors	29
Area Consultants	5
Assistants	23
Administrators	4
Consultants	5
Fiscal	<u>4</u>
Total	70

During the next five years it is projected that Wyoming DVR will maintain the current number of personnel. Replacement of personnel, leaving for any reason (in the next five years) based on previous years' experience, will be as follows:

Counselors	<u>35</u>
Total	35

Personnel Development

Wyoming currently does not have an institution of higher education which prepares rehabilitation professionals. The three nearest rehabilitation training programs are the University of Northern Colorado, Utah State University and Montana State University which concentrate on private and public rehabilitation respectively. All three programs are Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) certified.

We currently have four counselors attending Utah State University, one attending Montana State University, and one working with Texas Tech University. The training process is monitored by having the attending staff members send a copy of each semester's registration and a copy of his or her grades to verify course completion. There are currently eight field staff members and two Administration staff members that have received a Masters degree from Utah State University, and one staff member has received his Masters degree from Montana State University. There are eleven staff members who have a Masters degree in something other than Rehabilitation Counseling. Fourteen staff members have a CRC and two individuals are preparing to sit for the exam.

Wyoming DVR is currently looking at Western Washington University as an alternate source of distance education for a master's degree program in Rehabilitation Counseling. This school is CORE certified; however, because the certification is fairly recent, Wyoming DVR would like to have more information on the program before recommending it.

Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Wyoming DVR recruits vocational rehabilitation counselors from the University of Northern Colorado, Utah State University and Montana State University whenever possible. Wyoming DVR actively participates on the advisory boards of the University of Northern Colorado and Utah State University, and has worked to improve communication with both schools to announce open positions and to recruit potential counselors. DVR has continuous recruitment ads and has been actively posting current vacancy notices with the three universities. This is in addition to placing ads in local and regional newspapers, with the Department of Workforce Services, and the Wyoming Job Network. Wyoming DVR, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, seeks to employ and advance qualified individuals with disabilities as well as minorities.

Wyoming DVR lists counseling staff vacancies with the Rehabilitation Recruitment Center of the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, and thus has national visibility for counselor openings as they occur. Periodic announcement of staff position openings are sent via e-mail from a listserv of CORE Graduate Programs. DVR also maintains a listserv for smaller colleges in the area that have Master level programs in related fields.

Wyoming DVR attempts to hire individuals that meet the CSPD requirements, but if for some reason this is not possible, an attempt is made to hire someone with a related Bachelors degree and two years of experience. This new hire is made aware that at the end of the one year probationary period, he or she will be expected to apply to and attend a CORE accredited school to receive a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling. The expectation is to have this Masters degree finished in four years.

Wyoming DVR currently has fifty-three individuals that meet or exceed the CSPD requirements. Of the remaining staff that do not meet the CSPD requirements, six are currently working on a Masters degree, and the balance are currently in their probationary period and will begin working to meet the CSPD at the appropriate time.

Wyoming DVR actively updates and implements a system which addresses current and projected personnel training needs. Coordination between Wyoming's personnel training needs and institutions of higher education occurs when the CSPD consultant and division administrator participate in the university program advisory meetings. DVR also participates on the Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RCEP) advisory board and CRP-RCEP Board.

Wyoming DVR began developing training plans in 2004 stemming from the use of the Professional Development Guide and Matrix, the performance appraisal system, an annual training needs survey, and via focus groups. In 2004, use of work plans was instituted as well. The CSPD consultant tracks training needs of all employees and addresses those needs through annual in-services for both counselors and assistants. DVR also sends individuals to training sessions provided by the State of Wyoming Personnel Division and private and public vendors. Staff is also supplied information on provider's web sites to assist with expressed training needs. Training in specific areas such as assessment, vocational guidance and counseling, job placement strategies, rehabilitation technology, and topics addressed in the Training Needs Assessment, are

addressed at the annual statewide in-service, regional in-services, on-the-job training with the Area Consultant and Training Officer, and/or by means of a contracted vendor.

Wyoming DVR has made a conscious effort to address retention and recruitment of staff by raising the pay scale for all field professional and paraprofessional staff. The state legislature has approved a three and a half percent pay raise for state employees, effective July 1, 2006. Periodically pay scales are adjusted to be more in line with the current employment market rates.

Wyoming DVR Futures Group

The DVR Futures Group is designed for employees who are interested in moving into new/different roles within the Division. This includes counselors who would be interested in mentoring new counselors, counselors who are interested in moving into management positions, and central office staff interested in moving into upper level positions.

This group provides input on business issues affecting the Division. They work directly with the Administrator and the Assistant Administrator for Field Services, and attend selected managers' team meetings to provide input.

The Futures Group is or will be involved in several projects, including: peer mentoring at in-services, quality assurance project feedback, Division representation at career fairs to recruit VR counselors, Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ) updates, in-service presentations, and eliminating stratification within the Division.

Personnel Standards

Wyoming DVR is committed to efforts to hire qualified rehabilitation staff beyond the current minimum standards established by the State of Wyoming Personnel Division. Specifically, Wyoming DVR adheres to the personnel standards as set forth in RSA Information Memorandum (IM) 99-30. That is, an individual must have a Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or another Master's degree, which would allow the person to meet national Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) requirements.

Because of our extreme difficulty in recruiting and hiring qualified rehabilitation professionals, when faced with no other alternative, DVR does hire individuals with a bachelor's degree in a related field with a minimum of two years relevant work experience. (Note: This is the State of Wyoming's personnel standard). In so doing, the individual is advised formally of DVR's expectations, as they pertain to personnel standards, and is offered the position only with their acknowledgement and agreement to pursue a master's degree. If a counselor has received education funding through the Agency, the individual contractually agrees to continue employment with DVR for three years subsequent to obtaining their Master's degree. If employment is terminated prior to this time, repayment may be required on a pro-rated basis.

Based on standards developed through the personnel system, each staff member participates in the annual Performance Appraisal System which analyzes job performance and identifies training needs. DVR continues to do annual training needs assessment of all staff, and

the CSPD Specialist tracks these training needs and links individuals to appropriate training. Training needs for the statewide in-service are determined by polling all DVR staff. Other avenues of obtaining training needs, such as focus groups, are also utilized. Counselors have immediate access to reference materials. This includes internet resources, reference books, and consultants. Beginning in 2004, work plans were instituted and training needs are addressed.

Wyoming DVR will assess counselor training needs on an individual basis in order to assure that we are in compliance with personnel standards per RSA-IM-99-30. The DVR Human Resources Development (HRD) staff member maintains individual counselor records that identify training needs, training received to date, and anticipated target dates for attainment of Master's/CRC. Priority of training includes time parameters for completion as follows:

- 1) Individuals with Bachelor degrees → Master's Rehabilitation
3 to 5 years
- 2) Related Master's degree → CRC
1 to 3 years

Progress towards identified training needs is monitored and tracked annually on an individual counselor basis.

Wyoming DVR's CSPD attempts to create our own qualified rehabilitation counselors through the distance learning grant at Utah State University and other universities. All staff without Master's Degrees are required to take advantage of the Utah State University or other distance learning programs with financial assistance from the Agency. The following table details the qualifications of current field staff (there is currently 1 counselor vacancy):

Staff	CRC	Master's Degree No CRC	BA/BS	Total Staff
Rehabilitation Counselors	7	13	8	29
Area Consultants	3	1	1	5
Administration	4	1	5	10

The Comprehensive Personnel Development System focuses not only on creating qualified rehabilitation counselors in Wyoming but on retention as well. The training grant is used to coordinate training activities to help counselors maintain their Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credentials and encourage other counselors who may qualify to obtain their CRC.

Of those counselors/consultants having Master's degrees in areas other than Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling, all have been advised and encouraged to acquire the designation of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor in accordance with the methods offered by the Commission on

Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). A record on each counselor/consultant towards accomplishment of the Agency standard is kept and monitored as to progress.

Staff Development

In 2004, Wyoming DVR began dispersing training budget funds on a regional basis. Prior to this, the funds were distributed on a first come first served basis. This change was made to allow area managers to have more control over the training budgets and subsequently the training made available to staff. Staff development procedures have been described above.

A wide variety of training has been made available to counselors and consultants. This training has been provided by Wyoming DVR, State of Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, as well as by numerous private vendors. Training offered at the DVR in-service included personality disorders, job development, quality assurance, and proper case file documentation. Training offered through the State of Wyoming included computer applications and supervisory skills. Training offered by private vendors covered a wide range of topics, including diagnoses/disorders, career building skills, leadership skills, and job coaching/job development. While this list is not all inclusive of trainings offered or attended, it does illustrate the variety available to counselors and consultants in Wyoming.

Assistants

DVR assistants are provided training through various methods. New assistants are trained by the lead assistant in the area, the counselor(s) that the assistant works for, as well as the area consultant. This approach to training the new assistant helps the assistant become acquainted with the procedures for that particular office and allows him/her to better meet the needs of the clients the agency serves. On a yearly basis, the assistant and the area consultant produce a list of training topics that the assistant and the area manager feel would be most useful for the assistant. This list is used as the basis for that individual's training in the upcoming year. Additional training topics that are of interest to the assistant can be chosen even if they are not identified on the list. Training topics that assistants have availed themselves to in the last year have included various computer skills, stress management, dealing with difficult people, and teamwork. Again, this list is not inclusive but does represent a variety of training available to these employees.

Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIAA) Update

Ongoing training is held throughout Wyoming on Ticket to Work and other Social Security issues. The training was presented by a partnership of the Wyoming Benefits Planning and Outreach (WyBPAO), the PASS-CADRE (Plans for Achieving Self Sufficiency), Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) and DVR. A number of DVR staff have taken advantage of these trainings.

Procedures to Disseminate Research

The DVR Central Office does maintain a lending library that contains some reference materials relevant to VR counseling. Reference materials are often requested by field staff or area consultants and may be purchased for their use. In-service speakers/trainers often provide research information, as do many conference presenters. Program consultants in DVR's Central Office stay current on trends in their specialty areas and share this with field staff. Specialty areas include: Governor's Committee for Employment of People with Disabilities; the Americans with Disabilities Act; Supported Employment; Staff Training, Quality Assurance; Transition from School to Work; Telecommunication Relay Service; Deaf Services; Business Enterprise Program; and small business planning. All DVR staff have access to the internet for research purposes.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

DVR has established and maintains minimum standards to ensure the availability of personnel within DVR who are trained to communicate in the native language or mode of communication of the client, either by hiring applicants with these skills or by developing current staff skills in these areas. The DVR handbook is available in Spanish. Interpreters are hired, as the occasion warrants, in order to effectively communicate with clients who utilize other languages. Several staff members have sign language skills and the agency helps them maintain and improve those skills. A program consultant, who specializes in services for the Deaf and hard of hearing, is available to help ensure that quality services are provided to this population. Essentials such as orientation to DVR, eligibility, etc., are on tape or in Braille for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Other needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired are obtained through purchase of services or from the Department of Education, Services for the Visually Impaired.

Performance Evaluation System

DVR must conform to the State of Wyoming Personnel Rules, which includes a Performance Appraisal system. This system requires that reviews be conducted twice a year with each employee. It can lead to improved performance through the analysis of strengths and weaknesses, and subsequent identification of training issues. This system does not impede the accomplishment of the purpose and policy of the program including serving the most significantly disabled. Also, counselors are assisted by their immediate supervisors, who review cases and act as consultants, trainers and resources regarding the vocational rehabilitation of clients.

The quality assurance/improvement consultant, who also serves the Human Resources Development (HRD) function, reviews case files on a regular basis with a standard protocol. He reports findings to the Field Services Administrator, recommending solutions and/or training to continually correct deficiencies, and to recognize and report those practices working well.

Coordination of Personnel Development Under IDEA

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Wyoming Department of Education establishes reciprocal referral services, utilization of each other's services and facilities to the extent practicable and feasible, and joint planning activities to improve services to individuals with disabilities.

This MOU strengthens the transition process and the availability of assistive technology to VR clients who are in school. This agreement specifies joint training on assistive technology, IDEA and other pertinent legislation.

The Department of Education is receiving a State Improvement Grant; the purpose is to include the special needs population into a standards based education reform effort. The primary goals outlined in the grant are:

1. To improve the pre-service and in-service training components for all Wyoming educators;
2. To improve recruitment and retention efforts of qualified and trained personnel to meet the needs of students with disabilities;
3. To provide parents/families with the learning tools necessary to understand and impact school reform; and
4. To create a sustainable partnership of stakeholders who will assist in overseeing and implementing this project – this group is known as the Office of Special Educations Program (OSEP) Steering Committee.

As member of the Wyoming Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities, the OSEP Steering Committee, DVR's major input and effort to date has been as follows:

Advocate, based on information from our 2000 and 2003 Rehabilitation Needs Assessments to have the Department of Education develop and use disability rights, self determination and advocacy curriculum; develop and utilize a curriculum for teachers, pre-service and in-service, towards building functional age appropriate community based education linking functional skills to school requirements for those students needing it; curriculum improving strategies for paraprofessionals, especially teacher assistants, job coaches, etc.; improve and expand Individualized Education Program (IEP) participation and include as appropriate Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Case Managers, Independent Living (IL) Specialists, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Benefits Specialists, and Social Security Administration (SSA) Personnel.

In FY 2005, one day of training was provided at five Wyoming cities: Cheyenne, Casper, Rock Springs, Evanston and Gillette. The topic of the training was "Successful Careers,

Customizing the Employment Experience for Each Job Seeker.” Personnel from DVR, school districts, Wyoming Education Association (WEA), and mental health staff took advantage of this training.

Affirmative Action

DVR assures that it takes affirmative action to employ and advance qualified individuals with disabilities and minorities in employment. Fifteen percent of the staff have disabilities and eight staff persons are over the age of 60. The State of Wyoming Personnel System follows affirmative action requirements and assures that VR maintains appropriate hiring procedures.

Attachment 4.12

Assessments; Estimates; Goals and Priorities; Strategies; and Progress Reports

- (a) Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities and Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs
- (b) Annual Estimates of Individuals To Be Served and Costs of Services
- (c)(1) State's Goals and Priorities
- (c)(3) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds
- (d) State's Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities:
 - (1) To Address Needs Identified in the Comprehensive Assessment and to Achieve Identified Goals and Priorities;
 - (2) To Carryout Outreach Activities to Identify and Serve Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities Who are Minorities; and
 - (3) To Overcome Identified Barriers Relating to Equitable Access to and Participation of Individuals with Disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program
- (e) Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

4.12(a) Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities and Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs

2003 Wyoming Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs (WYARNs):

In August 2004, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) received the results of a comprehensive statewide needs assessment which was conducted by a private contractor. A copy of the final report was provided to the Commissioner, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and copies are available at the DVR Central Office, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

The purpose of the Wyoming Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs (WYARNs) is to plan program issues which engendered the assessment; to identify the programs, populations and service areas to which the findings are applicable; and to identify implications for future agency policy development and program planning.

On May 14, 2003, DVR executed a contract with a private consulting firm for the purpose of completing an updated Wyoming Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs Study. The term of this project ended August 31, 2004. The Wyoming Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs 2003 final report and executive summary were available to the public on that date.

Selected portions of the Executive Summary to the WYARNs 2003 report follow:

Wyoming Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs 2003

The Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, in compliance with federal regulations, directed that there be a comprehensive assessment of the needs of Wyoming citizens with disabilities for vocational rehabilitation services. The Executive Summary presents substantive findings of the full assessment.

The Process

This assessment was conducted to complement and provide follow-up to similar studies conducted in 1996 and 1999. In those two previous studies it was determined that three populations consistently were underserved. Those populations were persons with acquired brain injuries, persons with severe and persistent mental illness, and students with disabilities in transition from school to employment or post secondary education. Given the extensiveness of findings in the past two similar studies, the current assessment was designed to look at longitudinal issues rather than to seek new concerns. However, if new concerns were to arise, those new concerns were to be explored and analyzed along with previously existing concerns. The current assessment process was also designed to evaluate the degree to which the Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has been able to address previously existing concerns, both locally and on a statewide basis.

The current assessment process was designed according to the basic principles of affirmative inquiry. Instead of asking what is wrong, what is lacking or what is not working, the

inquiry more directly focused on what is working well. According to the principles of affirmative inquiry, if what works well can be identified, then those customs or practices should be encouraged. Rather than attempt to fix what may appear broken, it is more effective to amplify and replicate what works well. Through acceptance and replication of what works well, practices which lead to unsatisfactory outcomes will eventually be supplanted by practices leading to more positive and effective outcomes.

Information was gathered from input at community forums, from community rehabilitation programs, from key informants throughout the state and from focus groups of persons with disabilities and their families. Additionally, information was derived by analysis of data from the United States Census Bureau, the Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Wyoming Department of Employment (Office of Research and Planning) and other state and local agencies and organizations. Surveys were conducted among persons with disabilities and families of persons with disabilities. Focus groups were held statewide and included persons with disabilities, their families, rehabilitation counselors and mental health professionals. Finally, the project consultants attended numerous meetings of statewide organizations and constituent groups in order to solicit feedback and input on consumer needs.

Demographics

Wyoming's economy is often out of step with the national economy. In the 1990-91 recession, for example, strong energy prices buoyed Wyoming's economy and slowed the national economy. Moving into the mid-part of the 1990s, the national economy recovered, while Wyoming's rate of growth began to wane at mid-decade under depressed commodity prices, slower growth in federal spending, and a decline in migration into the state.

During the past decade, aging of the population along with extensive out-migration of mobile younger workers has significantly skewed the age distribution of the state's population. Older individuals (aged 45-55) represented 15 percent of the Wyoming population in 2000, compared to 13.4 percent of the national population. Conversely, individuals aged 25-34 were 12.1 percent of the Wyoming population versus 14.2 percent of the national population. The net loss of individuals in this age group is also reflected in a somewhat lower representation of children ages 0 – 5.

The forecast is for a continued annual net out-migration throughout the current planning decade. Net population growth is projected over the planning period, however, as out-migration is expected to be offset by an excess of births over deaths. The effect of these trends can be expected to have a significant impact on the age distribution of Wyoming's population.

These trends not only affect the labor pool (and, therefore job opportunities), but also the pool of applicants for services such as vocational rehabilitation.

Job Market

Over all, during the past decade jobs grew at an average rate of 1.9 percent per year, while population grew at only a rate of 0.9 percent per year. Over the decade 2000 – 2010, the

projection is for some slowing in growth, though with job growth continuing to outstrip population growth (1.5 vs. 0.4 percent per year). Studies published by the Wyoming Department of Employment, Research and Planning note that growth has differed, and will continue to differ, among sectors. *Outlook 2000* provided a brief overview of the anticipated job potential of key sectors in the Wyoming economy. Overall, the authors described the state as being in transition from a goods-producing to a service-producing economy, as is the economy of the nation as a whole. In *Outlook 2010*, the authors further note that areas of Wyoming's economy that expanded to serve the needs of baby boomers and their children are now being adversely affected by the out-migration of younger workers in the 1990s. Retail clothing, recreation, health care, childcare and educational services are all facing large decreases in the face of a declining customer base.

Disabilities in Wyoming

Of the 315,859 non-institutionalized persons in Wyoming aged 16 – 64, *Census 2000* indicates that some 21,556 had some kind of a “work disability”. In this report, census and other data are used to develop a detailed picture of this population and to assess the effectiveness of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in reaching individuals of differing ages and disabling conditions.

Out of the population reporting an employment disability, an estimated 10,563 individuals were reportedly unemployed. This represents 34.1% of the civilian non-institutionalized population 16 to 64 years of age. By comparison, unemployment rates for members of the general Wyoming population actively seeking work have been in the range of 4% in recent years (4.4% in May 2003; 3.7% in May 2004).

Population of Special Concern – Persons with Acquired Brain Injuries

The lack of an effective process for timely referral for vocational rehabilitation services (as well as other post-acute services) is part of a larger problem; there is no comprehensive, statewide service system such as the state/federal programs serving individuals with developmental disabilities or mental illness.

Within this less-than-ideal framework, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides quality services to many individuals with ABI. Rehabilitation Counselors make creative and effective use of existing services, many of which are of high quality, but not readily available in all parts of the state. The consultants would see the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation as under-serving this population only in two respects. First, many people do not find their way to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation at all, or if they do it is months or years after the time when they could have gotten optimum benefit from Vocational Rehabilitation services. Second, a full array of services is not available in many communities.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation makes extensive use of community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) to provide services (particularly supported employment) for individuals with acquired brain Injuries. Of these, Rocky Mountain ReEntry has earned an excellent reputation, and remains the only CRP in Wyoming serving only this population.

Unfortunately, they have programs only in the Lander/Riverton and Casper areas. Two relatively large, independent agencies serving a broad spectrum of disabilities (Easter Seals and Goodwill) are serving significant numbers of adults with acquired brain injuries. Other CRPs affiliated with the Developmental Disabilities system are beginning to serve a few individuals with adult onset ABI, who would not be eligible for services through traditional Developmental Disabilities funding.

Population of Special Concern – Persons with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness

According to Census 2000, an estimated 25,884 individuals in Wyoming reported having some kind of mental disability. Census respondents are considered to have a mental disability if they reported a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting 6 months or more, that resulted in difficulty learning, remembering, or concentrating. This number, therefore, includes both developmental disabilities and conditions affecting mental health.

Other data sources are somewhat more helpful. The National Institute of Mental Health indicates that an estimated 22.1 percent of Americans ages 18 and older, about 1 in 5 adults suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. When applied to the 1998 U.S. Census residential population estimate, this figure translates to 44.3 million people. In addition, according to the National Institute for Mental Health, four of the ten leading causes of disability in the U.S. and other developed countries are mental disorders: major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Persons with SPMI continue to be underserved in many Wyoming communities, simply because not all communities have supported employment programs that work collaboratively with local Rehabilitation staff, using established best practices.

Structurally, effective supported employment services are team based, with mental health staff and clinicians, the rehabilitation counselor and the job coach, with other players as needed, are all at the table with the client. Professionalizing the job coach position is seen as a key step toward integrating the job coach into the team process.

A critical barrier to statewide implementation of optimally effective supported employment across the state is the persistence of the older clinical, “readiness” model in some mental health facilities and programs. This approach adversely impacts vocational outcomes by withholding or withdrawing supported employment services because the individual is having symptoms or is judged to be “not ready” by staff, and by allowing clinical schedules or agency needs to preclude or interfere with employment.

From the exemplary programs studied, a key factor in the success of the teams in placing and keeping people with SPMI in the world of work was the lack of fiscal restraints at the team level. Money issues, hours of authorized services and total expenditures per client were handled by the programs administrators, not by the team members. The rehabilitation counselor on the team did not need to negotiate the rate for a job coach, the percentage of participation from the mental health center in the cost of the job or any similar issues which so often hamper effective collaboration. Those issues were handled by the supervisors of both the mental health and

rehabilitation staffs. This allowed the team to decide what the client needed and to get it done quickly.

Population of Special Concern – Students Transitioning from Secondary Education to the World of Work

A review of the data indicates that, for most disabilities, there is little evidence of a trend in the overall numbers of students with disabilities identified by the Wyoming public schools, or in the numbers of students in various diagnostic groups. The most striking exception is autism, the prevalence of which has increased almost exponentially. This is consistent with experience throughout the nation. The National Institute of Mental Health recently stated in its budget message, “Autism represents an urgent and significant scientific and public health challenge.” “Over the past two decades, estimates of prevalence have escalated from 1/10,000 to as many as 1/250 (autism spectrum) to 1/400 (classic autism).

The total number of students with disabilities has been essentially flat for the 7-year period, and little change in this age group is projected through 2010. Accordingly, there appears to be no demographic basis for a change in the flow of students with disabilities from school to work, or to the offices of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

There is, however, likely to be a very significant increase in the number of students with a diagnosis of autism leaving the schools. This is a serious concern, given the concerns expressed by counselors about the adequacy of available services for this population.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is very active in working with youth of transition age. As of June 30, 2004, there were 252 clients on the Division’s caseload who were age 16 – 18 at the time they applied for services. Yet Rehabilitation Counselors express considerable frustration at the number of young people who come to them two or three years after graduation, not having known earlier that Vocational Rehabilitation could be of help to them. These students had managed to go through four (4) years of secondary education without being referred to Vocational Rehabilitation.

A central focus of the current Needs Assessment was to assess the effectiveness of the transition process as a whole, with an emphasis on assessing the effectiveness of existing mechanisms for identifying students with disabilities other than developmental disabilities (DD). Transition age students in this group may have disabilities that are more difficult to recognize, but which may represent a significant barrier to post-graduation employment. Although these students may not fall under the auspices of special education, many would be covered under Section 504.

Input from Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and school staff, other agencies and public forums conveyed two basic messages. First, the quality of the transition process varies greatly from school district to school district, and second, all schools face challenges in identifying, engaging and referring students who are not in a special education program or who do not request section 504 accommodations. Reported reasons range from a lack of awareness that other students could benefit from Vocational Rehabilitation services to an unwillingness of

students to be singled out or labeled. Akin to the latter point is a concern on the part of school staff about confidentiality.

Although widespread concerns were heard about the failure to identify and refer students with other than “developmental” disabilities, this is somewhat at odds with statewide school statistics. Local districts identify students with a wide array of disabilities. Included in the statistics for the 2002-3 school year were 5,369 students with learning disabilities, which made up 46.2% of the students identified as having disabilities. This is a group that Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and representatives of post-secondary educational systems often indicated were not being referred for services or adequately prepared for work or post-secondary education. This suggests that the issue may be more one of engagement and referral than of recognition.

Summary - Populations of Special Concern

The study confirmed that each of the three populations targeted for special emphasis in the Needs Assessment process are underserved in many areas of the state. This under-service arises from several factors, including:

- a failure of other service providers (the medical community in particular) to identify and refer individuals with acquired brain injuries;
- a lack of awareness of Vocational Rehabilitation services on the part of persons with acquired brain injuries (ABI) and by students with disabilities (in particular, those students whose disabilities have not resulted in enrollment in school special education programs);
- inconsistency, across the state, in availability of high-quality, disability-appropriate vocational services to persons with Acquired Brain Injuries and Severe and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI);
- a high degree of variability from district to district in the quality of school-to-work transitions programs; and
- inconsistency in the degree of collaboration between local Division of Vocational Rehabilitation staff and the school districts and community mental health programs.

Ethnic Populations

The ethnic makeup of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation’s caseload closely mirrors the ethnicity of the Wyoming population as a whole, and the consultants found no indication that any ethnic or disability group other than the targeted disability groups is underserved or underserved at present.

Patterns of Services and Outcomes

In the needs assessment conducted in 1997, 6,389 files from the Wyoming Department of Employment were matched with case records from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. This represented approximately 50% of the Rehabilitation case records for the period 1990 - 1996. The years 1992 through 1995 were selected for analysis of earnings history.

The records were divided into three separate groups:

- 1) clients who were determined not eligible for vocational rehabilitation services;
- 2) clients who were determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, but whose rehabilitation programs ended other than successfully (not employed at closure); and
- 3) clients who were determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and whose rehabilitation program ended in a successful (employed at closure) closure.

The outcome measurements applied across the three distinct sets of clients were “earnings” and “quarters worked.” Analysis of wage records showed that individuals determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services earned approximately 50% more per year than their counterparts who were determined not eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.

In a similar manner, the wage records of those individuals closed as rehabilitated were compared to the earnings for those eligible individuals who, at case closure, were not determined to have successfully completed a program of rehabilitation services. Findings quite clearly showed that individuals who successfully completed a vocational rehabilitation program earned more and worked more quarters per year than individuals not closed as rehabilitated.

Cumulative wages per individual over the course of the four years for individuals who successfully completed a vocational rehabilitation program averaged more than twice the earnings of individuals not completing a successful vocational rehabilitation program.

In excess of **6 million dollars** in increased earnings was contributed to the economy by people who were served successfully by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation over the four-year period.

Other significant findings include:

- Even after 5 years, individuals whose cases were closed “successfully rehabilitated” earned substantially more in wages in 1999 than their counterparts who were closed other than rehabilitated.
- Individuals closed as rehabilitated also worked more quarters than those individuals closed other than rehabilitated. This also remains true for up to five years after closure.
- Wages (following table) earned in 2003 for persons closed as rehabilitated were more than double of those closed other than rehabilitated.

State Fiscal Year Last Served	Closed as Rehabilitated (Employed at Closure)		Closed Other than Rehabilitated (Not Employed at Closure)	
	Number	Average Wages 2003	Number	Average Wages 2003
1999	603	\$7,414	560	\$3,737
2000	686	\$8,149	655	\$4,388
2001	726	\$7,639	658	\$4,001
2002	727	\$7,787	627	\$3,161
2003	727	\$7,156	781	\$3,196

The Efficacy of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Consistent with the findings of the 1997 Assessment, the current data demonstrates that completion of a vocational rehabilitation program makes a significant difference in earnings compared to those individuals whose cases were closed other than rehabilitated. This finding of higher earnings was true regardless of the region of the state. Statewide, vocational rehabilitation makes a difference in earnings.

The efficacy of rehabilitation, however, more dramatically emerges when looking at the differences in wages earned between those people with brain injury who were closed as rehabilitated and those people with brain injury who were closed other than rehabilitated. Completion of a vocational rehabilitation program significantly enhances earnings, by as much as 100%.

Table 6.18: Average SFY 2003 Wages for Clients diagnosed with Brain Injury, by Last Year Served and by Closure Code

State Fiscal Year Last Served	Closed as Rehabilitated (Employed at Closure)		Closed Other than Rehabilitated (Not Employed at Closure)	
	Number	Average Wages 2003	Number	Average Wages 2003
1999	24	\$8,790	17	\$4,413
2000	26	\$5,030	35	\$6,645
2001	37	\$5,547	33	\$3,595
2002	32	\$6,832	23	\$1,542
2003	30	\$5,053	24	\$472

The efficacy of vocational rehabilitation services is likewise shown for people with severe and persistent mental illness. Individuals who completed a vocational rehabilitation program and were closed successfully rehabilitated earned as much as 300% more than similar individuals who did not complete a vocational rehabilitation program in 2003. The data revealed, however, that individuals with severe and persistent mental illness worked more quarters yet earned less in wages than did people with other types of disabilities. People with severe and persistent mental illness do not fare as well in the world of work as do people with other types of disabilities.

Table 6.21: Average SFY 2003 Wages for Clients diagnosed with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness, by Last Year Served and by Closure Code

State Fiscal Year Last Served	Closed as Rehabilitated (Employed at Closure)		Closed Other than Rehabilitated (Not Employed at Closure)	
	Number	Average Wages 2003	Number	Average Wages 2003
1999	52	\$4,017	61	\$2,246
2000	55	\$4,364	62	\$4,043
2001	71	\$5,523	66	\$1,584
2002	60	\$7,196	40	\$1,133
2003	62	\$4,292	37	\$1,297

Community Rehabilitation Programs

All Regions of the state continue to be served to some degree by community rehabilitation programs operating under the State’s developmental disabilities and behavioral health programs, or by independent organizations. Coverage is comprehensive for individuals with developmental disabilities, although a few agencies affiliated with the DD system still do not provide extensive supported employment opportunities. These gaps have been, to a degree, filled through the use of independent non-profit or for-profit agencies, and through the employment of free-lance job coaches.

There are still geographic, programmatic and disability-related gaps in the capacity of community rehabilitation programs to provide the array of services the State Rehabilitation agency needs for other clients with the most significant disabilities:

- Although there is progress, there are substantial gaps in services to persons with ABI;
- State of the art supported employment services for persons with severe and persistent mental illnesses are more widely available than at the time of the previous Needs Assessments, but are still not available to all communities; and
- The potential for CRPs to play a more substantial role in preparing students with disabilities for the transition from school to employment in the community has not been fully explored.

In conclusion, there is clearly a need for action on the part of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to support expansion or enhancement of the capacity of community rehabilitation programs to serve individuals with acquired brain injuries or severe and persistent mental illness. Monitoring of the evolving role of community rehabilitation programs in serving youth in transition from school to work may also be productive.

Other Components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System

Section V of the 2003 Needs Assessment notes that a number of activities were undertaken to explore perspectives of individuals and organizations inside the "system." Interviews and focus groups were conducted with representatives of organizations serving or advocating on behalf of persons with disabilities. From this section of the Needs Assessment:

"These inquiries were designed to explore:

- perceptions of the Vocational Rehabilitation Process;
- how Vocational Rehabilitation interacts with other agencies;
- availability of quality services to persons with acquired brain injuries or long term mental illness;
- the availability of effective programs for transition of students with disabilities from school to work;
- the possibility that there may be other populations for whom service issues exist; and
- environmental and other barriers that may adversely impact the ability of persons with significant disabilities to work and participate in the community."

Nearly all the mandated WIA partner programs are located within the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services (DWS), Employment Services (ES) Division. DVR and ES staff have worked in a cooperative manner for years, and even more so since DWS became a Department on July 1, 2002.

Most DVR and ES offices are co-located at the one-stop centers across the State, and referrals between the two divisions are routine. The ETA 9002A Report shows that 2,763 Persons with a Disability* were registered with ES as active job seekers for the 12 month period ending June 30, 2005. Of that total, 1,727 received staff assisted services as noted below, and 1,197 entered employment.

230 – Career Guidance
628 – Job Search Activities
980 – Referred to Employment
97 – Referred to WIA Services
103 – Referred to Support Services

* Person with is disability is self disclosed by the customer when registering with ES and does not necessarily meet the definition of person with a disability as used by DVR.

In addition, 121 individuals with a disability were served through the WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs during this time period.

DVR's management information system shows that of all DVR clients served during State FY 2006 (7/1/05 - 6/30/06), approximately 6.2% (235 individuals) were referred to DVR by a "One-Stop Center"; this is primarily the ES Division.

Futures Academies

The culmination of the Needs Assessment was the convening of three Futures Academies. Each Academy focused on one of the three populations of special concern. Academies were convened to address rehabilitation services to:

- students with disabilities who are transitioning from secondary education to the world of work and whose disability is other than developmental;
- persons with severe and persistent mental illness; and
- persons with acquired brain injuries.

As part of the assessment process, the project consultants observed “centers of excellence” in which they attempted to identify the essential characteristics of these programs. In other words, what were the core elements that significantly contributed to the programs’ successes? The Academies were asked to take this information as a starting point and to explore strategies for supporting excellent programs and encouraging more communities to adopt the best practices demonstrated by these successful programs. The intended outcome for each Academy was to provide the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation with the core elements of a 5-year plan to guide the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and its partner agencies in improving services to these individuals.

The Transitions Futures Academy was convened on June 30, 2004, in Cheyenne. The purpose of the Academy was to address the problem that students with disabilities other than developmental are not being referred to and provided services by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation while they are in secondary educational settings. The Academy began by creating a future vision for students transitioning from secondary education. Academy participants were then asked to identify key features of really good transition programs and to prioritize those based on the vision that had earlier been created. These were converted to goals that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation can use to develop a comprehensive plan. The following goals were recommended:

1. that community employers are involved as mentors;
2. that schools gain an understanding of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation;
3. that students earn real pay for real work;
4. that parents are involved and informed; and,
5. that planning is based on the model of person centered planning.

The SPMI Futures Academy began with a visioning exercise in which participants created a vision for the ideal service delivery system. Based on that vision, key features of good

SPMI programs were identified. Once the key features of a good SPMI system were identified, the Academy participants were asked to prioritize those features they felt were most needed in order to reach the vision. The following features were identified and were prioritized as critical to implement:

1. services are client centered;
2. from the perspective of the client, services are seamless;
3. dollar issues are off the table for the team working with the client, and are left to administration to figure out;
4. there is a philosophy that everyone works – no exceptions; and
5. there is an expansion of the definition of work.

Given these five (5) critical features, the Academy then proceeded to develop action steps to recommend to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. These action steps not only involve things the Academy recommended to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, but also action steps that best belong within the realm of responsibility of other agencies and/or organizations. However, it was felt that the Division could best refer those action steps to the other agencies or organizations. The outcomes of the Academy provide the basis for the development of a long range plan by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The ABI Futures Academy participants began by visioning desired future vocational outcomes for persons with acquired brain injuries. Once the desired future was a commonly shared vision, the participants were then asked a series of three questions: 1) what are the components of the desired system; 2) what current resources and partners are in place; and, 3) what should Vocational Rehabilitation be asking of its partners in order to move towards the desired future.

It was pointed out that a comprehensive system extends far beyond the parameters of vocational rehabilitation. However, the action items that the participants developed were those that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation should either take direct responsibility for or encourage other components of the desired system to initiate. These action items form the basis of a longer range plan which can and should be developed by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Not all tasks identified are the responsibility of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Where the recommended tasks exceed the parameters of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Division should personally encourage the other partnering agencies to take on those tasks.

The tasks which the Academy recommends to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are as follows (in order of priority):

1. Provide employer education and participation in work placement
2. Provide ABI education to social security
3. Provide an accurate identification of brain injury census
4. Develop a comprehensive prevention plan
5. Provide assessments for ABI among DVR clients in secondary schools

6. Provide education to the legislature on dollar savings with waiver services to gain resources
7. Provide easy access to VR services for persons with ABI
8. Develop a broad based ABI release to be signed at identification of the injury for follow-up services so that services could be convened much earlier
9. Tie together agencies and resources identified in the personal care plan

Concluding Summary

In the opinion of the consultants who conducted the 2003 Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs, the Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has shown that:

- services provided to persons with disabilities are effective;
- eligibility determinations are appropriate;
- persons from minority backgrounds have equal access to services,
- the agency is fulfilling the intent of the federal legislation.

Summary of Recommendations

The Needs Assessment included 17 recommendations, which were categorized as follows:

- two recommendations pertain to the serious emerging concern of the rapid growth in the number of young people diagnosed with autism;
- two recommendations pertained to maintaining and expanding the public's favorable perception of Division of Vocational Rehabilitation community resources and availability of services;
- one recommendation dealt with improving job coach stature and longevity within community rehabilitation programs;
- two recommendations addressed the utilization of Community Rehabilitation Programs by Division of Vocational Rehabilitation;
- five recommendations concerned needed improvements to the population of students in Transition from School to Work;
- two recommendations pertained to expanding statewide programs to serve individuals with SPMI; and
- three recommendations addressed statewide expansion of services for persons with acquired brain injuries.

Development of an Action Plan

DVR has implemented an action plan to address the recommendations included in the Needs Assessment report. Key players in the development of the plan include the DVR Central Office Executive Team, the DVR Management Team (which includes the Field Service Area Managers), and the State Rehabilitation Council. Input will also be solicited from other organizations and agencies as identified in the Needs Assessment report.

4.12(b) Annual Estimates of Individuals To Be Served and Costs of Services

The number of individuals in Wyoming who are potentially eligible for DVR services under the State Plan is derived from the United States Census (2000), Summary File F3. **Note:** The U.S. Census Bureau’s estimate of Wyoming’s population on July 1, 2005 was 509,294.

Consolidated Disability and Employment Data, 2000 Census

2000 Census, Summary File F3	
Total persons (civilian, non-institutionalized population)	493,782
Total, Age 16 – 64	315,859
Percent of population aged 16 – 64	63.0%
Ages 16 – 64 with a work disability	30,952
Percent of total persons aged 16 – 64	9.8%
Employed	20,389
Percentage Employed	65.9%
Unemployed	10,563
Percentage Unemployed	34.1%

The following table describes the potential base of future DVR clients, as adjusted for projected population growth from 2000 to 2010. (Table 3.11 from the WYARNs 2003 report)

Potential Applicants for Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Projected to 2010

(Civilian non-institutionalized individuals ages 16 – 64)

Vocational Rehabilitation Planning Groups	Characteristics	2000	2010 Projected (4.1% increase)
Total State population		493,744	513,928
Planning Group 1	Individuals ages 16-64 with a work disability who were not working, Census 2000.	10,563	10,996
Planning Group 2	”Potential applicants” – Planning Group 1, less current applicants	8,839	9,201
Planning Group 3	Annual applicants, existing DVR caseload	1,724	1,795
Planning Group 4	Annual applicants determined by DVR to have “significant” disabilities	978	1,018

Fiscal Year 2007 Projections:

1. Number of eligible individuals who will receive services under
 - a. General Rehabilitation Program (Title I, Part B): 4,260
 - b. Supported Employment Program (Title VI, Part B): 454

Note: Approximately 707 individuals will be served in supported employment (SE), but only 454 will receive services from the \$300,000 Title VI, Part B grant, if available. The rest of the SE individuals will receive services from the Title I, Part B grant.

2. Costs of services for the estimate in #1: \$5,141,820

Note: This estimate is for the cost of services provided directly to the individuals. These services, which are purchased from vendors, include the following: eligibility/need assessment, physical and mental restoration, training, maintenance, transportation, etc. This estimate does not include administrative costs such as staff salaries, staff travel, telephone, postage, rent for office space, indirect costs, etc.

4.12(c)(1) State's Goals and Priorities

Goals and priorities in carrying out the Vocational Rehabilitation Program:

Goals:

1. Successfully rehabilitate 664 or more eligible Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment clients in an efficient and effective manner.
2. Work with clients who need supported employment services and close 198 or more successfully.
3. Continue staff development and improve recruitment for qualified rehabilitation counselors.
4. In partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council, complete a comprehensive statewide needs assessment.
5. Provide statewide consistency and reliability of casework.
6. Maintain Disability Determination Services performance standards.
7. Maintain the process where staff has input into division-wide decisions.
8. Market VR services.

Priorities:

1. Participate in the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) activities/initiatives to promote integration of services in order to optimize client services in an efficient and effective manner.
2. Work with Mental Health Centers (MHCs), Wyoming State Hospital, Division of Behavioral Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities, and Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) to develop more comprehensive services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI) and for individuals with acquired brain injury (ABI).
3. Collaborate with the Native American VR Projects and provide appropriate support within DVR's resources.
4. Increase collaborative efforts with the school districts, the Department of Education, Independent Living Centers, and other organizations to identify all

students with disabilities who will be transitioning from school to work, and strengthen transition programs for these students.

5. Maintain and promote major components/initiatives for effective Succession Planning, including the Futures Group.
6. Promote coordinated efforts with Synergy and Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) to further develop Business Leadership Networks (BLNs).
7. Support the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA) initiative.
8. Refine and improve staff retention efforts through the use of staff surveys, field visits from administrators, and employer of choice initiatives.
9. Increase collaboration with Federal and State Agencies, and non-profit and other organizations to build stronger partnerships.
10. Promote the use of DVR's Small Business Development Fund (SBDF), and other grants and resources for clients interested in starting a small business enterprise.
11. Quality Assurance Program

Wyoming VR has developed, and is continuing to refine, a quality assurance program, which is designed to address the corrective actions and recommendations identified in RSA's FY 2004 107 review.

Each corrective action and recommendation is being addressed with the goal of reaching at least a 90% accuracy rate on each item. Goals include training emphasis with counselors, assistants and area managers at in-services; a change to Comprehensive Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs section in the Wyoming Rehabilitation and Employment System (WYRES); and an alert system based on WYRES to give staff a tool to help manage the caseload. The corrective action plan was approved by RSA. Quarterly reports on QA progress are sent to RSA.

Evaluation Standards and Indicators:

Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act required the establishment of evaluation standards and performance indicators for the State VR program. The standards and indicators follow with Wyoming DVR's results for FFY 2005 (10/01/04 – 09/30/05):

Evaluation Standard 1 – Employment Outcomes. A Designated State Unit (DSU) shall assist any eligible individual, including an individual with a significant disability, to obtain, maintain, or regain high-quality employment.

(1) Employment Outcomes.

- i. *Performance Indicator 1.1.* The number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the current performance period compared to the number of individuals who exit the VR program after achieving an employment outcome during the previous performance period.

Required Performance Level: Equal or exceed previous performance period (507)

Actual Performance: 664

- ii. *Performance Indicator 1.2.* Of all individuals who exit the VR program after receiving services, the percentage who are determined to have achieved an employment outcome.

Required Performance Level: 55.8%

Actual Performance: 67.6%

- iii. *Performance Indicator 1.3.* Of all individuals determined to have achieved an employment outcome, the percentage who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or Business Enterprise Program (BEP) employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage.

Required Performance Level: 72.6%

Actual Performance: 98.8%

- iv. *Performance Indicator 1.4.* Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the percentage who are individuals with significant disabilities.

Required Performance Level: 62.4%

Actual Performance: 72.1%

- v. *Performance Indicator 1.5.* The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self, or BEP employment with earning levels equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to the State's average hourly earnings for all individuals in the State who are employed (as derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics report "State Average Annual Pay" for the most recent available year).

Required Performance Level: .52 (ratio)
Actual Performance: .63

- vi. *Performance Indicator 1.6.* Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the difference between the percentage who reported their own income as the largest single source of economic support at exit and the percentage who reported their own income as the largest single source of support at application.

Required Performance Level: 53.0
Actual Performance: 65.8

Evaluation Standard 2 – Equal Access to Services. A Designated State Unit (DSU) shall ensure that individuals from minority backgrounds have equal access to VR services.

- i. *Performance Indicator 2.1.* The service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all non-minority individuals with disabilities.

Required Performance Level: .80
Actual Performance: .93

* Results are preliminary, pending verification by RSA.

Factors that may affect performance:

Performance Indicator 1.1: With a current unemployment rate of 3.6% in Wyoming (May 2006), we envision that some potential applicants for VR services may not even be reaching our doors; they can simply apply for positions either through Employment Services at the WIA one stop center or directly with the employer who has the opening, and have a fairly good chance at being hired if they meet the qualifications. This is especially true for individuals who are willing to relocate to where the jobs are. This could negatively impact the number of successful closures in the future.

Performance Indicator 1.2: For the same reason noted above, results on this indicator could show a decline in the future - fewer successful closures and the same (or more)

unsuccessful closures. However, at this time, we are relatively certain that the required performance level can be met.

Performance Indicators 1.3 and 1.4: We do not anticipate any problems meeting the required performance level on either of these indicators.

Performance Indicator 1.5: The energy boom that is occurring in Wyoming has resulted in an increase in the average earnings for Wyoming residents, which has not yet been completely identified in the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. This is because the latest data available from BLS is from the third quarter of 2005 and is just beginning to reflect the increase in wages. The BLS data for average hourly earnings in Wyoming (average weekly wage divided by 40 hours per week) follows:

2001: \$13.47
2002: \$13.92
2003: \$14.37
2004: \$15.00
2005: \$15.95 (preliminary data for third quarter)

Although Wyoming DVR has not had a problem meeting the required performance level on this indicator, we expect that our actual results will decline in the future and the possibility does exist that at some point we may not be able to attain the required level.

Performance Indicator 1.6: We do not anticipate any problems meeting the required performance level.

Performance Indicator 2.1: Although DVR has always exceeded the required performance level for this indicator, our performance level has declined over the last few years. We expect that there are several reasons for this. There are two Section 121 American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Grants, Red Feathered Eagle and Northern Arapaho, on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. Although the ethnic makeup of DVR's clients closely mirrors the ethnicity of the Wyoming population, American Indians living on or near the Reservation may be more likely to participate in one of these local projects than the State program. American Indians comprise approximately 2.3% of Wyoming's population (2004 Census), and a great majority live on or near the Reservation.

While the unemployment rate for Fremont County, where the Reservation is located, was 4.4% (May 2006), 2000 Census data shows the American Indian unemployment rate on the reservation at 32.2%. Jobs are difficult to find on the Reservation, and like many clients DVR works with, people often do not want to relocate. In addition, the culture of this population tends to accept a person with a disability more readily, and does not emphasize a need to overcome or circumvent the impediment to employment that might exist due to a disability.

Another problem we have noted in the past is the need to emphasize the correct coding of race and ethnicity in our MIS system. Frequent training on this issue is needed because of the

high turnover rate for counselors and assistants that we have experienced over the past several years.

Wyoming DVR believes that one of the biggest factors affecting performance is that the required performance levels are mandated, and are the same for all General/Combined Agencies regardless of economic and other factors which are different for every State. Performance levels should be negotiated between RSA and each State Agency, as they are with the WIA Adult, Youth and Dislocated Worker Programs.

4.12(c)(3) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds

Title VI, Part B funds will be used and distributed through five DVR regional budgets. Rehabilitation Counselors at the local level will authorize Supported Employment services as needed from a variety of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) statewide. DVR estimates that approximately \$547,350 will be expended on Supported Employment services in FFY 2007. Funding sources include: \$300,000 in Section 622 funds, supplemented with \$247,350 from Title I (Section 110) funds.

Approximately 707 individuals will be served in supported employment (SE), but only 454 will receive services from the \$300,000 Title VI, Part B grant, if available. The rest of the SE individuals will receive services from the Title I, Part B grant.

This estimate is for the cost of services provided directly to the individuals. These services, which are purchased from vendors, include the following: eligibility/need assessment, physical and mental restoration, training, maintenance, transportation, etc. This estimate does not include administrative costs such as staff salaries, staff travel, telephone, postage, rent for office space, indirect costs, etc.

Supported employment services are available statewide, with twenty CRPs currently participating in the provision of services.

1. Individuals with the most significant disabilities have access to supported employment services on a statewide basis;
2. Within each CRP, a supported employment coordinator has been designated and a network of coordinators exists statewide;
3. Supported employment coordinators market supported employment to employers in their communities; and
4. Employers are prominently involved in supported employment throughout the State.

Refer to Attachment 7.3 for additional information on Supported Employment Services.

4.12(d) State's Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities:

- (1) To Address Needs Identified in the Comprehensive Assessment and to Achieve Identified Goals and Priorities;**
- (2) To Carryout Outreach Activities to Identify and Serve Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities Who are Minorities; and**
- (3) To Overcome Identified Barriers Relating to Equitable Access to and Participation of Individuals with Disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program**

DVR has provided innovation and expansion (I&E) funding for activities designed to continue addressing some of the needs identified in the 2000 and 2003 Needs Assessments (WYARNs). Most activities are designed specifically to expand and improve the vocational rehabilitation services available to individuals with the most significant disabilities.

The following activities are being considered for I&E funding in FY 2007:

- A. In 2007, DVR anticipates providing continued financial assistance for further expansion of the Wyoming Business Leadership Network (WBLN). The WBLN has operated in the Rock Springs area of Wyoming for one year. The time frame for expansion to additional communities is two years, to insure that operations are fully stabilized before WBLN begins a new project. Thus, DVR anticipates that I&E funding for the WBLN will remain the same in 2007.

Due to the loss of the WBLN project director in Gillette and the disappointing support from the Gillette business community, WBLN efforts in Gillette will be phased out in 2005 and early 2006. Funding will be re-directed to establish a BLN in Casper in 2006.

Estimated Cost: \$399,061

- B. Based on recommendations included in the 2003 Needs Assessment, DVR will consider the use of I&E funding for a project targeted towards improving and expanding services for individuals with ABI.

Estimated Cost: \$100,000

- C. DVR will provide funding support for the State Rehabilitation Council. Expenditures may include travel, stipends, advertising, supplies, meeting room rental, interpreters, facilitation services, and costs related to consumer satisfaction/outreach.

Estimated Cost: \$20,000

- D. Funding support for the State Independent Living Council; allowable expenditures may include travel, interpreters, and registration fees.

Estimated Cost: \$5,000

**Special Populations:
Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities who are Minorities**

Populations that are Unserved or Underserved

The 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act strengthened the requirements for outreach to “individuals with disabilities who are members of groups that are currently unserved and underserved, including members of minority groups.” Project Consultants who conducted the Needs Assessments in 1997, 2000 and 2003 found no evidence of any population defined by region, type of disability, age, race or ethnicity that is not being served. The 2003 Needs Assessment noted specifically:

“Although the population of Wyoming as a whole is primarily white, some communities across the State have significant populations of individuals reporting other racial or ethnic affiliations.”

“...a comparison of Vocational Rehabilitation caseload data to data from Census 2000 clearly shows that patterns of service closely mirror the racial and ethnic diversity of the Wyoming population at large. Notably, the Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation continues to serve American Indians in proportion to their representation in the State’s general population despite the presence of the two Native American vocational rehabilitation programs on the Wind River Reservation.”

**Services to Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities
Who are Minorities**

Native Americans

Objective: Promote opportunities to enhance equal access and quality service for individuals who are culturally diverse within the rehabilitation system.

Methods: Continue to have Native American representation on the State Rehabilitation Council and State Independent Living Council.

Continue participation in the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation.

Objective: Maintain and promote the Section 121 VR Projects for Native American Rehabilitation Services on the Wind River Reservation.

Methods: The Red Feathered Eagle Vocational Rehabilitation (RFEVR) was awarded new grant funding for up to five additional years, starting October 2004. This Project is an effective way to provide rehabilitation services (especially culturally

appropriate services) on the Wind River Indian Reservation and to those Native Americans living near the Reservation.

Two representatives from DVR serve on the RFEVR Advisory Council.

Continue discussions with the Northern Arapahoe representatives to develop a Memorandum of Agreement similar to the RFEVR agreement.

Objective: Section 121 Project staff to attend the DVR annual Counselor and Support Staff In-Service Training sessions.

Method: Advise Project staff of in-service training through invitation/announcement, including a copy of the agenda.

Objective: Include Project staff in surveys of training needs assessments and advise of training availability.

Methods: Forward training needs surveys to Project staff for completion.

Send training announcements as appropriate and place Project staff on mailing lists.

Objective: Collaboration between the Wyoming Relay/Deaf Services Program and the Section 121 Projects on availability of services.

Method: Provide information to the Project staff and their consumers on the availability and use of the Wyoming Relay, the distribution of teletypewriters (TTYs) and amplified phones; obtaining assistive devices, obtaining qualified interpreters and developing interpreter training that addresses culturally appropriate services.

The populations discussed below were identified in the 2003 Needs Assessment as “underserved.” All were being served, but in less-than representative numbers, or less effectively than other populations. The discussion below focuses on describing efforts made to better serve these groups.

Persons with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI)

Objective: Improve and expand services to persons with SPMI.

Method: Develop a conference for mental health programs around the state to hear about a successful model existing in Casper and discuss methods to replicate it.

Objective: Continue to develop Supported Employment (SE) services with mental health organizations on a statewide basis.

Method: Contacts with mental health centers and promotion of SE services.

Objective: As training becomes available in the area of working with and serving those with mental illness, have DVR staff and appropriate mental health personnel attend. Invite mental health personnel to attend DVR in-service when appropriate topics are involved.

Method: Invite mental health personnel to attend DVR in-service at no cost to them when the training is being presented in their area of the State. Alert mental health personnel to training via other entities.

Persons with Acquired Brain Injuries (ABI)

Objective: Continue to encourage CRPs to consider providing services to individuals with ABI.

Methods: Continue to refer individuals with ABI to CRPs and consult with them to improve services.

Invite personnel of Rocky Mountain Re-Entry and other CRPs to training as topics in the area of ABI become available.

Meet with members of RSP of Wyoming to determine the current availability and scope of services for individuals with ABI, and discuss the CRP's plans for expansion of services.

Re-issue an RFP targeted towards improving and expanding services for individuals with ABI.

Students in Transition from School to Work

Objective: Strengthen and improve the working relationship with the Department of Education.

Methods: Continue to have VR represented on the Wyoming Department of Education Transition Council and work to improve timely referrals.

Continue to involve the Department of Education in State Rehabilitation Council activities and meetings.

Continue to encourage local school districts to identify students with disabilities and make timely referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation.

Explore the possibility of jointly approaching the Legislature for additional funding and/or positions to provide transition services. This may include other state agencies.

Objective: Encourage local school districts to make timely referrals to VR.

Methods: Field staff communication with the local school district personnel to educate them regarding VR mission and services.

Reinforce the importance of timely referrals to DVR by the local school district personnel.

VR staff will attend IEP meetings when invited by the school.

Identify new systems to improve referrals and working relationships, including replicating successful service models existing within the state.

General Education Provisions Act (GEPA):

GEPA requirements include describing proposed steps to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, Federally-funded programs. The potential impediments to equitable access or participation include gender, race, national origin, color, disability or age. In addition to the proposed steps previously described in this Attachment, the following actions have been or will be taken to ensure equitable access and participation in DVR's programs:

1. The 2003 Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs identified three disability populations of concern in Wyoming: Persons with acquired brain injury (ABI), persons with severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI), and students with disabilities who will soon transition from school to work.
 - A. DVR has issued an RFP with the intent to develop a statewide program that will organize and mobilize existing organizations into a cohesive unit that will support the needs of the ABI population.
 - B. DVR has developed working relationships with most of the Mental Health Centers in Wyoming, using the supported employment service model as the method to better serve the SPMI population. DVR continues to include additional Centers as they become interested in participating in this service model.
 - C. Students with disabilities continue to be a special concern for DVR. Distance and the lack of staff make it difficult to have the positive impact needed on all of Wyoming's 48 school districts. DVR staff attempt to attend all Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings that have vocational implications. Staff also

provide Special Education Directors and teachers with information on DVR's transition services.

2. Memoranda of Understanding (MOU)

- A. DVR has an MOU with the University of Wyoming and all Wyoming Community Colleges. This MOU is designed to guide the planning and delivery of support services to individuals with disabilities who are mutual clients of DVR and enrolled at a Wyoming institution of higher education.
- B. An MOU is in place with the Section 121 Program on Wyoming's Wind River Reservation. Through this MOU, DVR provides consultation with Project staff and Native Americans with disabilities.
- C. The Wyoming Division of Workers' Safety and Compensation and DVR have an MOU to provide rehabilitation services to DVR eligible individuals who have been injured in job-related accidents.

3. Individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing have potential barriers to equal access and participation due to their disability. DVR has taken steps to ensure equal access and participation in our programs for these individuals.

- A. At DVR's 2005 in-service training for our Assistants, training was provided which included: use of a text telephone (TTY); use of the telecommunication relay service (Wyoming Relay); Deaf culture; strategies for communicating with hearing-impaired clients; and use of sign language interpreters.
- B. Similar training has been provided to DVR Counselors and Managers during Regional "mini in-services" which are conducted periodically across the State.
- C. DVR collaborates in many ways with the Wyoming Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (WYRID): to identify all known sign language interpreters in the State; to evaluate their skill level using a method which was jointly developed by DVR and WYRID; and to compile and distribute the list of interpreters to all DVR staff, other service providers, government agencies, businesses and individuals.
- D. Training is routinely offered to service providers, government agencies and private sector businesses on Deaf culture, communication strategies, use of interpreters, use of text telephones and Wyoming Relay, and working with DVR staff. This type of training facilitates appropriate referrals to DVR as well as the provision of services and employment for DVR clients.
- E. Wyoming Relay is a program administered by DVR. Recently, a public awareness campaign was conducted, which included radio advertising, billboards, and print advertising statewide. This was designed to educate the public on the

availability of 7-1-1 to call individuals who have a hearing impairment, and not to hang up when receiving a Relay call.

4. Older workers: The "Boomers and Business" initiative is a cooperative effort between Wyoming's Governor and AARP Wyoming to assist older workers to find employment and plan for Wyoming's retirement "boom." Current US Census predictions indicate that by the year 2020, Wyoming will lead the nation with the largest percentage of residents greater than 65 years of age.
 - A. To effectively address older workers' needs, a collaborative partnership of senior employment specialists, workforce representatives, and private and public sector organizations was formed. DVR has two staff who participate on this committee.
 - B. The goal of this committee is to ensure that individuals comprising the baby boom generation continue to contribute meaningfully to the State's workforce and economy. Specific plans to achieve that goal include expanding the role of DWS Workforce Center services to older workers by:
 1. Enhancing communication of services available for older workers to employers, employees and the public.
 2. Training front line personnel on older worker issues.
 3. Enhancing the DWS database to more effectively capture data on older workers.
 - C. All Divisions within the Department of Workforce Services are committed to helping businesses find qualified older workers, and to helping older workers access employment and training opportunities.

Assistive Technology Services and Devices:

A broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices are provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process. Wyoming DVR uses the Centrum, a non-profit agency that provides AT evaluations and equipment to clients throughout the state. An AgrAbility program began in May 2006 as a grant program administered by the University of Wyoming. Wyoming DVR has met with AgrAbility officials and will continue to work with them to provide AT services to the agricultural community. Training was provided to counselors and assistants at the statewide in-services on the Job Accommodation Network.

4.12(e) Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

Actions taken in support of DVR's Goals and Priorities identified in the previous State Plan:

A. Goals:

1. Successfully rehabilitate eligible vocational rehabilitation and supported employment clients in an efficient and effective manner.

DVR provided support to field staff in their efforts to provide quality rehabilitation. In Federal Fiscal Year 2005, 664 clients were rehabilitated, including 198 supported employment clients.

This goal has been met.

The strategy to include supported employment funds in the counselors' case service budget has been successful in terms of streamlining the process for counselors and assistants. This strategy has been in place for some time and continues to be effective.

2. Continue staff development and improve recruitment for qualified rehabilitation counselors.

DVR continues to market VR regionally and via the Internet. DVR maintains contact with schools that produce rehabilitation counselors. DVR has expanded attendance at college and university job fairs to improve recruitment. Also, DVR is working with the Department of Workforce Services to develop recruitment tools for the Internet and handouts for job fairs. Staff development continues with major in-services for counselors and assistants, regional in-services and training identified by individuals to improve skills and knowledge base.

3. Provide statewide consistency and reliability of casework.

DVR has established a statewide quality assurance program. The management team will continue to meet quarterly so that casework, practices and policies remain consistent statewide.

This goal has been met and will continue to be addressed.

4. Maintain Disability Determination Services (DDS) performance standards.

DDS moved to a paperless system to enhance services. DDS receives continued support from the DVR central office. All DDS performance standards continue to be met.

This goal has been met and will continue to be addressed.

5. Maintain the process where staff has input into division-wide directional decisions.

DVR developed a Futures Group and the Counselor Assistant Advisory Council to provide staff with the opportunity for input in decision making.

This goal has been met and will continue to be addressed. New members to the Futures Group are identified as individuals are promoted or leave the agency. The CAAC was revitalized with new members in May and June 2006.

6. Market VR services.

DVR coordinated with DWS to market the department as well as VR services.

This goal has been met and will continue to be addressed with new letterhead, posters, banners, etc. purchased by the Department and distributed and displayed in each VR office and at public meetings with WIA partners, the Workforce Investment Board and other opportunities.

7. Open a new office in Kemmerer, Wyoming: Based on projected population growth, projected business growth, and increasing caseload size in Lincoln and Sublette Counties, it was decided to open a new VR/Employment Service Office (Workforce Center) in Kemmerer. It will be staffed by a full-time VR Counselor, a full-time VR Assistant, and two full-time Employment Specialists. This new office will be fully staffed and operational by June 30, 2005. It is expected that Kemmerer will become a model office by developing more effective ways to partner with the other Workforce Center staff on a local basis, and replicate these new procedures in other Workforce centers across the State.

A new VR office was opened and staffed with a counselor and assistant on July 1, 2005. Employment Services and VR share space and have established a strong working relationship which benefits our mutual customers.

This goal has been met.

There are a number of factors that have and will continue to impede progress to achieve our goals. A major factor is turnover among field staff. Wyoming DVR is experiencing 33% turnover in field staff each year. Loss of experience and the difficulty in quickly training staff to be effective is an ongoing challenge. Wyoming covers 98,000 square miles and the travel required to meet clients and supervise staff is a barrier to providing services quickly and efficiently. Wyoming has the lowest population in the nation with few resources available in terms of physicians, rehabilitation facilities, and expertise in some impairments, ie. orientation and mobility trainers.

B. Priorities:

1. Participate in The Department of Workforce Services activities/initiatives to promote integration of services in order to optimize client services in an efficient and effective manner.

VR staff have taken a proactive role in DWS meetings to help mold the direction of the department and to develop a working relationship with all members of DWS. DWS Business Plan goals that were a VR responsibility were met in calendar year 2005.

2. Continue working with Mental Health Centers (MHCs), Wyoming State Hospital, the Division of Behavioral Health and Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) to develop more comprehensive services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI) and for individuals with acquired brain injury (ABI).

Representatives from these organizations were invited to, and many participated in, Centers for Excellence planning. VR efforts concentrated on maintaining and improving the Casper psychiatric rehabilitation program.

3. Collaborate with the American Indian VR Projects and provide appropriate support within DVR's resources.

DVR staff attended quarterly Advisory Council meetings and offered training opportunities and guidance on the VR process to new RFEVR staff.

4. Increase collaborative efforts with the school districts, the Department of Education, Independent Living Centers, and other organizations to identify all students with disabilities who will be transitioning from school to work, and strengthen transition programs for these students.

A Department of Education representative participated in the Centers of Excellence planning and VR State Rehabilitation Council meetings. A

VR counselor continues to represent VR on the Wyoming Transition Council.

5. Maintain and promote major components/initiatives for effective Succession Planning, including the Futures Group.

DVR established a Futures Group, made up of staff interested in providing input on issues affecting DVR. Several Futures Group members have been promoted, as staff express an interest in promotion they have been encouraged to participate in the Futures Group. The group has been expanded to include assistants since they have valuable input to contribute.

6. Promote coordinated efforts with Synergy and Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) to further develop Business Leadership Networks (BLNs).

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation continues to work closely with SYNERGY to develop and expand new BLNs statewide. Expansion of BLNs is based on several items: Have current BLNs matured to the point that attention and energy can be redirected to establishing the new BLN; and has the timeframe for expansion been met. The goal is to expand every two years.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation supports the expansion of the WIND WYCORP project that develops working relationships with small communities that probably could not support a BLN. The WIND approach is to gain support of vendors and customers, then incorporate the business concept into the mixture.

7. Support the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIA) initiative.

Staff in DVR's Central Office provided assistance to callers requesting information about the Ticket to Work program and its relationship to the vocational rehabilitation process. Ticket recipients were referred to the Wyoming Benefit Planning Assistance and Outreach (WyBPAO) program and the local Vocational Rehabilitation office. A management information report was developed on Ticket to Work clients for use by Central Office and Field staff. Training was provided in seven Wyoming locations on Ticket to Work and other Social Security programs. This training was provided by WyBPAO, Social Security, Protection and Advocacy, and DVR staff. Policy changes have been communicated to staff.

C. Innovation and Expansion Activities:

The following activities were identified in last year's State Plan for I&E funding (FY 2006). Actual expenditures are for the time period October 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006.

1. In 2006, DVR anticipates providing continued financial assistance for further expansion of the Wyoming Business Leadership Network (WBLN). The WBLN has operated in the Rock Springs area of Wyoming for one year. The time frame for expansion to additional communities is two years, to insure that operations are fully stabilized before WBLN begins a new project. Thus, DVR anticipates that I&E funding for the WBLN will remain the same in 2006.

Estimated Cost: \$399,061

Expenditures: \$216,421

Report of Progress: The Rock Springs project has begun. DVR anticipates providing continued financial assistance for further expansion of the Wyoming Business Leadership Network (WBLN). The time frame for expansion to additional communities is two years, to insure that operations are fully stabilized before WBLN begins a new project.

2. Based on recommendations included in the 2004 Needs Assessment, DVR will consider the use of I&E funding for a project targeted towards improving and expanding services for individuals with ABI, SPMI, or students in transition.

Estimated Cost: To be determined

Expenditures: \$0

Report of Progress: The first ABI Request for Proposal (RFP) resulted in just one proposal being submitted. This proposal was submitted by the Brain Injury Association of Wyoming (BIAW). The BIAW is currently an information and referral service. The proposal was a continuation/expansion of that information and referral service. Since DVR had a more global systems change model in mind for the new proposed project, it was rejected. Since that time, the RFP has been revised and was released on December 5, 2005. The proposed contract commencement date is October 1, 2006. The most important change in the RFP, which should make this one more successful, is that \$100,000/year or up to \$500,000 for five years has been authorized.

3. In 2006, DVR will continue funding support for the State Rehabilitation Council. Expenditures may include travel, stipends, advertising, supplies, meeting room rental, interpreters, and facilitation services.

Estimated Cost: \$20,000
Expenditures: \$6,215

Report of Progress: DVR continued funding support for the State Rehabilitation Council. Expenditures included travel, stipends, advertising, supplies, meeting room rental, interpreters, and facilitation services. The State Rehabilitation Council met four times, per the requirements. The development of a State Rehabilitation Council to support and advise DVR continued.

4. In 2006, funding support for the State Independent Living Council will continue. Allowable expenditures may include travel, interpreters, and registration fees.

Estimated Cost: \$5,000
Expenditures: \$0

Report of Progress: Funding support for the State Independent Living Council continued. Allowable expenditures included travel, interpreters, and registration fees. DVR continued to provide oversight and direction to the State Independent Living Council.

Attachment 4.16(b)(2)

Mediation and Impartial Due Process Hearing Procedures

Mediation and Impartial Due Process Hearing Procedures

All applicants and clients shall be informed of the procedures for informal as well as formal resolution of disagreements, including the name and address of the Administrator of the designated state unit (DSU) with who appeals for an Administrative Review, Mediation and Formal Hearings are to be directed in writing.

Additionally, applicants and clients shall be given the name and address of the Client Assistance Program (CAP) and the description of services available from this source. Applicants and clients will be notified in writing of individual's rights and availability of assistance from CAP.

Any applicant for or recipient of vocational rehabilitation services who is dissatisfied with a determination made by personnel of the DSU that effect the provision of vocational rehabilitation services concerning the furnishing or denial of services may request a timely review of those determinations. Applicants who are found ineligible for services and previously eligible individuals who are determined to be no longer eligible for services are permitted to challenge the determination of ineligibility. The individual has the right to be represented by a person of their choice at all levels of appeals and they have the right to submit evidence. If informal resolution fails, a formal hearing will be conducted within 60 days of the written request. CAP is available to assist the applicant or eligible individual during all levels of the appeals process.

The appeal procedures may begin at any level. The DVR appeals process consists of four levels:

Level 1: Informal Review

If the client is dissatisfied with a decision made by his/her counselor and it can't be resolved by discussing the issue with the counselor, he/she can request that the area manager review the decision. The counselor will help schedule the managerial review.

Level 2: Administrative Review

Administrative review of the decision will be completed by a previously uninvolved Vocational Rehabilitation administrative staff person. The applicant or client is encouraged to participate in the informal review and in the administrative review. The decision will be provided to the client in written form along with a description of how the client can access the next level in the appeals process.

Level 3: Mediation

The mediation process is voluntary on the part of all parties; is not used to deny or delay the right of the individual to a formal hearing, or to deny any other right afforded to the individual under Title I of the Act; and is conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator

who is trained in effective mediation techniques. A list of qualified mediators will be maintained by the state. The state will pay the cost of mediation and formal hearing. Mediation will be scheduled in a timely manner and in a convenient location for all the parties of the dispute. All discussions that occur during mediation will be kept confidential. If an agreement is reached, that agreement must be put in writing.

Level 4: Formal Review (Fair Hearing)

Formal review (Fair Hearing) will be conducted by an Impartial Hearing Officer (IHO) from the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). Applicants and eligible individuals have the right to be represented during the mediation and formal review. The Fair Hearing will be held within 60 days of receipt of the client's request for review unless the parties jointly agree to a specific extension of the time. Selection of the IHO will be in accordance with the requirements of Section 102 (c)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended.

The second, third and fourth levels of review must be requested in writing. The client will have ten days to request each review. This request will be addressed to the DSU Administrator.

The IHO will provide a full written report of the findings and the grounds for decision within 30 days of the completion of the hearing to the applicant or eligible individual or the individual's representative and the DSU.

Either party may request a review of the decision of the IHO within 20 days of the decision. The chief official of the designated state agency (Department of Workforce Services) shall provide an opportunity to submit additional evidence and information relevant to the appeal.

The chief official shall not overturn or modify a decision of the IHO that supports the individual with a disability, unless it has been determined, based on clear and convincing evidence, that the decision of the IHO is clearly erroneous on the basis of being contrary to Federal or State law, the approved State Plan, Federal regulations, or any State regulation or policy that is consistent with Federal requirements.

The chief official shall make a final decision in writing, including a full report of the findings and grounds for the decision, within 30 days of providing notice of intent to review. A copy of the decision shall be provided to the individual or his/her designated representative.

The chief official shall not delegate responsibility for making the final decision to any officer or employee of the Designated State Unit.

During the appeals process, DVR shall not suspend, reduce or terminate vocational rehabilitation services, including evaluation and assessment services, being provided to the individual unless the individual or the individual representative requests it, or unless such

services have been obtained through misrepresentation, fraud, collusion, or criminal conduct on the part of the individual or the individual's representative.

The chief official shall use the following standards when determining whether to review a hearing officer's decision:

1. Is the initial decision supported by substantial evidence?
2. In reaching the initial decision, has the Impartial Hearing Officer given appropriate and adequate interpretation to such factors as:
 - i. The Federal statute and regulations as they apply to the specific issue;
 - ii. The State Plan as it applies to the specific issue in question;
 - iii. Approved Federal and State policy as it applies to the issue in question;
 - iv. State agency options in the delivery of services if such options are permissible by Federal statute or regulation;
 - v. Restrictions in the Federal statutes or regulations with regard to such supportive services as maintenance and transportation;
 - vi. Key portions of conflicting testimony.

At the request of one or both parties, reasonable time extensions for good cause are allowable, except for the 20-day limit for either party to request an impartial review of the IHO's decision. The IHO's decision will be sent to the RSA Commissioner.

Either party may file a civil action for review of the final decision issued by the IHO or the reviewing official.

Attachment 6.9(c)(2)

Services Subject to a Financial Needs Test

Services Subject to a Financial Needs Test

The financial needs test provides a formula from which the counselor may determine the existence and extent of the individual's financial need so that equitable treatment is accorded to all applicants/clients with disabilities in similar circumstances on a statewide basis. The financial need of an individual will be determined within a reasonable time prior to the provision of services.

DVR requires that rehabilitation services be provided at public cost only to individuals found to require financial assistance. However, a financial needs test may not be applied as a condition to furnishing the following services:

1. An assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;
2. Rehabilitation counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice;
3. Job-related services, including job search, job placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services and follow along services;
4. Referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies through cooperative agreements;
5. Trial work experiences;
6. Extended Evaluations;
7. Personal Assistance services as defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 361.5(b)(39);
8. Auxiliary Aids or services; and
9. Any vocational rehabilitation service if the individual in need of the service has been determined eligible for SSI or SSDI benefits.

All other services provided by DVR within an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) are subject to the financial needs test.

Financial Needs Test (and Allowed Cost of Living Expenses)

The financial needs test includes these components:

- ♦ The Divisions financial application must be completed, signed and dated by the client or legal guardian, and must be witnessed;
- ♦ The financial application will be reviewed and updated yearly or when the client's financial situation changes;
- ♦ The gross income of the family unit will be considered;
- ♦ Parental income is considered only for clients who are minors, i.e., who are under age 18;
- ♦ Liquid asset allowance is \$2,000 for the client or a total of \$3,000 for the client and spouse (cash, bonds, stocks, savings); and
- ♦ Disability related income will not be considered in financial needs test (i.e., SSDI, SSI, WC, VA).

Attachment 7.3

Quality, Scope and Extent of Supported Employment Services

Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) providing supported employment services in Wyoming must be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). Community Mental Health Centers (MHCs) providing supported employment services must be certified by the Behavioral Health Division of the Wyoming Department of Health. The DVR Management Information System includes criteria to measure integration, client satisfaction, scope of service, client wages and hours worked per week, variety of work options, and disability groups served. This data collection system allows DVR to make informed decisions to modify, improve, or expand supported employment services delivered through CRPs and MHCs.

Supported employment services provided to individuals are coordinated through an individualized plan for employment (IPE) that includes a description of the services needed; the identification of the state, federal, or private programs that will provide the continuing support; and a description of the basis for determining that continuing support is available.

Supported employment services, which may be provided to individuals with significant disabilities include, but are not limited to:

1. If necessary, a supplemental evaluation to the evaluation of rehabilitation potential provided under 34 CFR Part 361.
2. Job development and placement into competitive, community integrated employment.
3. Traditionally time-limited services needed to support the trainees in employment, such as:
 - a) Intensive on-the-job skills training and other training provided by skilled job trainers, co-workers and other qualified individuals, and other services specified in 34 CFR 361.48, in order to achieve and maintain job stability.
 - b) Provision of follow-up services, including regular contact with employers, trainees with significant disabilities, parents, guardians, or other representatives of trainees and other suitable professional and informed advisors in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement; and
 - c) Discrete post-employment services following successful case closure by DVR, that are unavailable from an extended services provider and that are necessary to maintain the job placement.

Each client's IPE describes the timing of transition into extended services to be provided by other state agencies and private non-profit organizations following the termination of time-limited services by DVR. DVR will provide traditionally time-limited services for a maximum of 18 months, unless a longer period to achieve job stabilization has been established in the IPE.

Supported employment services are available statewide, with twenty CRPs currently participating in the provision of services. The following represent improvements in quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services statewide:

1. Twenty CRPs (including MHCs) throughout the State have implemented supported employment programs;
2. Individuals with the most significant disabilities have access to supported employment services on a statewide basis;
3. Within each CRP, a supported employment coordinator has been designated and a network of coordinators exists statewide;
4. Supported employment coordinators market supported employment to employers in their communities;
5. Employers are prominently involved in supported employment throughout the State;
6. The Department of Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities continues to be used as a resource for supported employment services for individuals with acquired brain injuries;
7. The Wyoming Business Leadership Network (WBLN) was established in 1998 with the strong support of DVR. The WBLN is an employer driven system dedicated to improving employment opportunities for individuals having significant disabilities; and
8. The Wyoming Centrum for Assistive Technology was created in 1998 with the strong support of DVR. The Centrum delivered assistive technology and job site accommodations to individuals with significant disabilities statewide, beginning in 1998, through 2004. The Centrum has been reorganized as an off-campus 501(c)(3) corporation.